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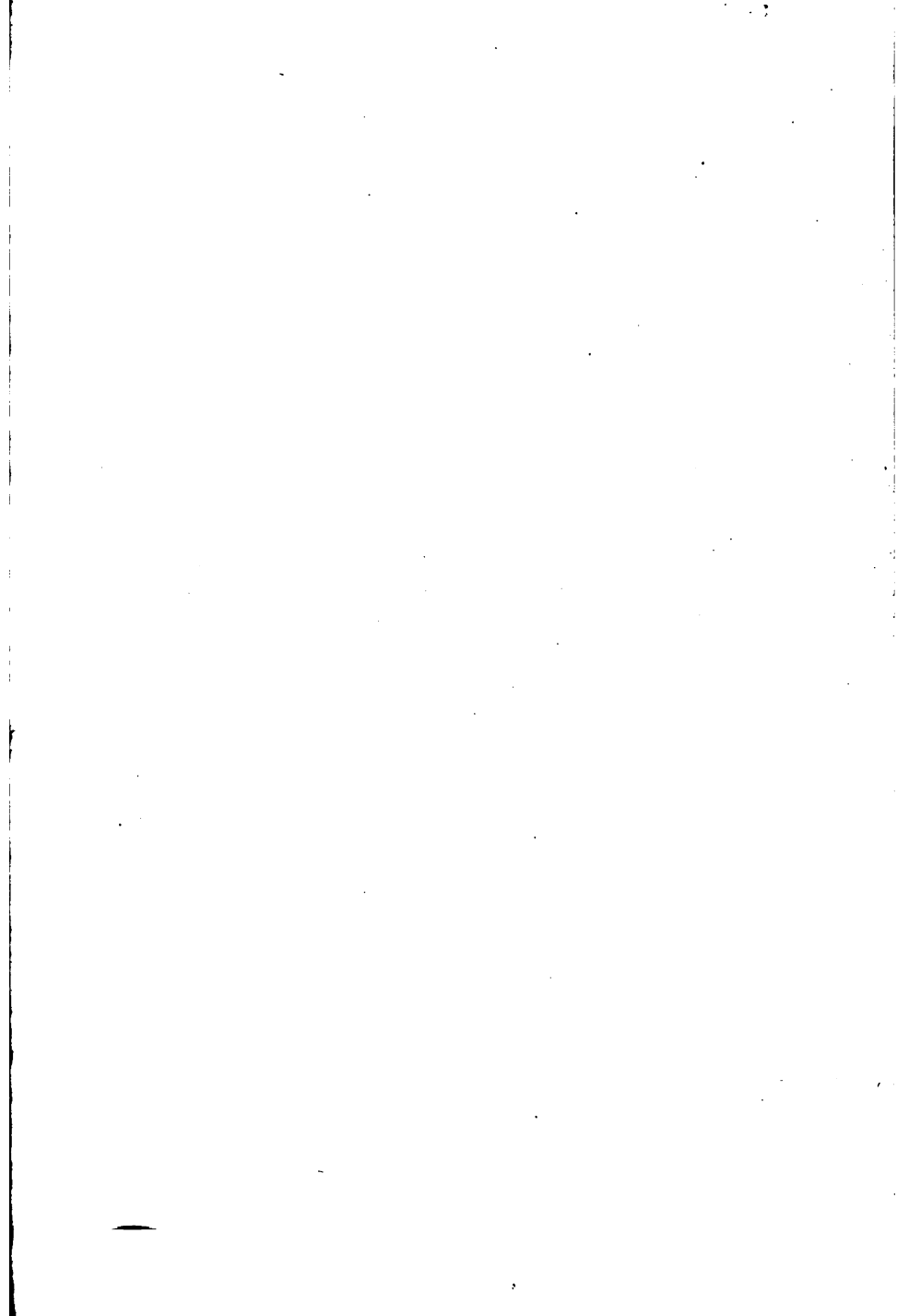
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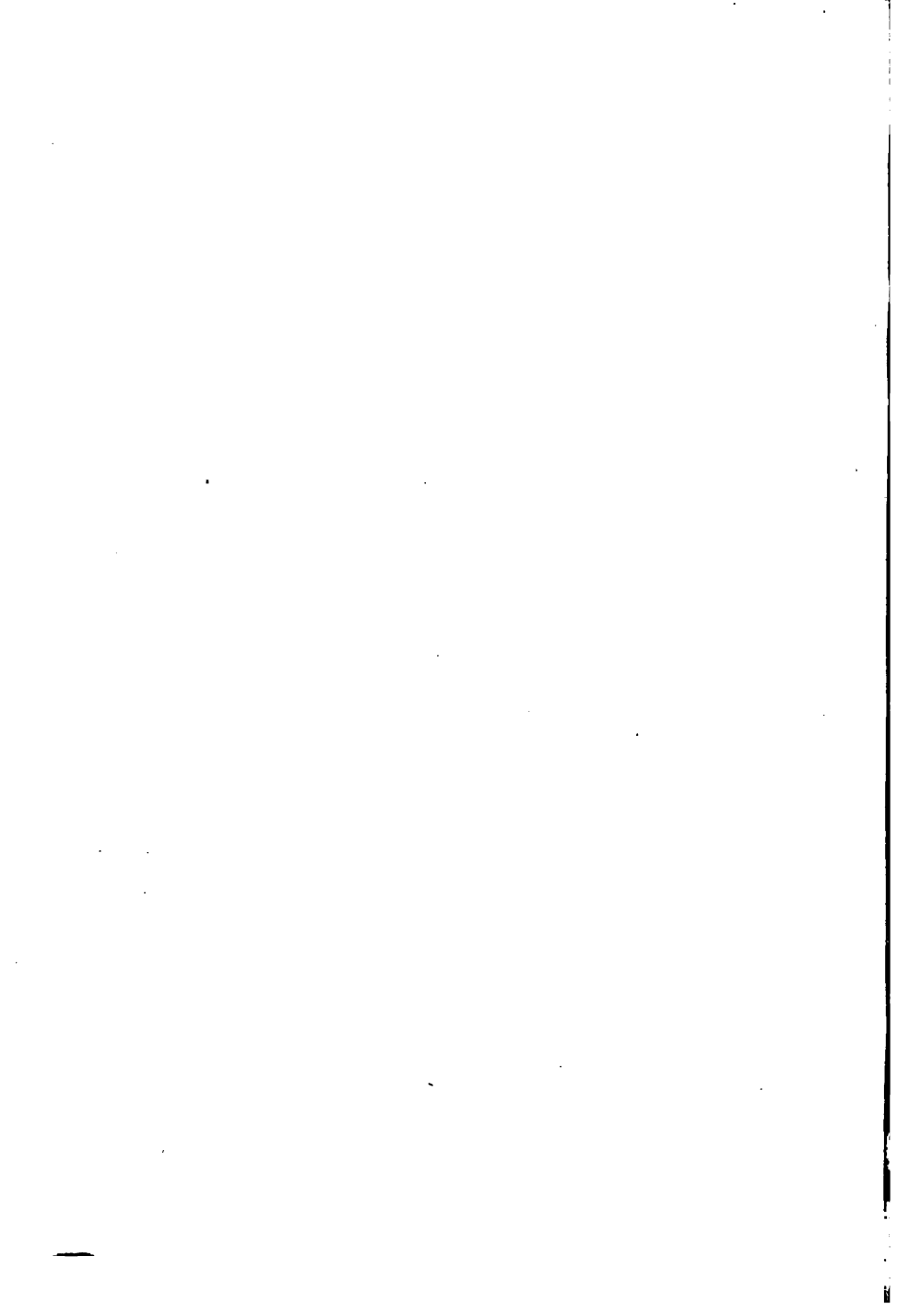


Rice

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## **SHADOWY THRESHOLDS**



# SHADOWY THRESHOLDS

BY

CALE YOUNG RICE

AUTHOR OF "WRAITHS AND REALITIES,"  
"COLLECTED PLAYS AND POEMS," ETC.

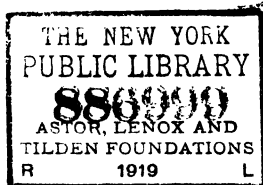


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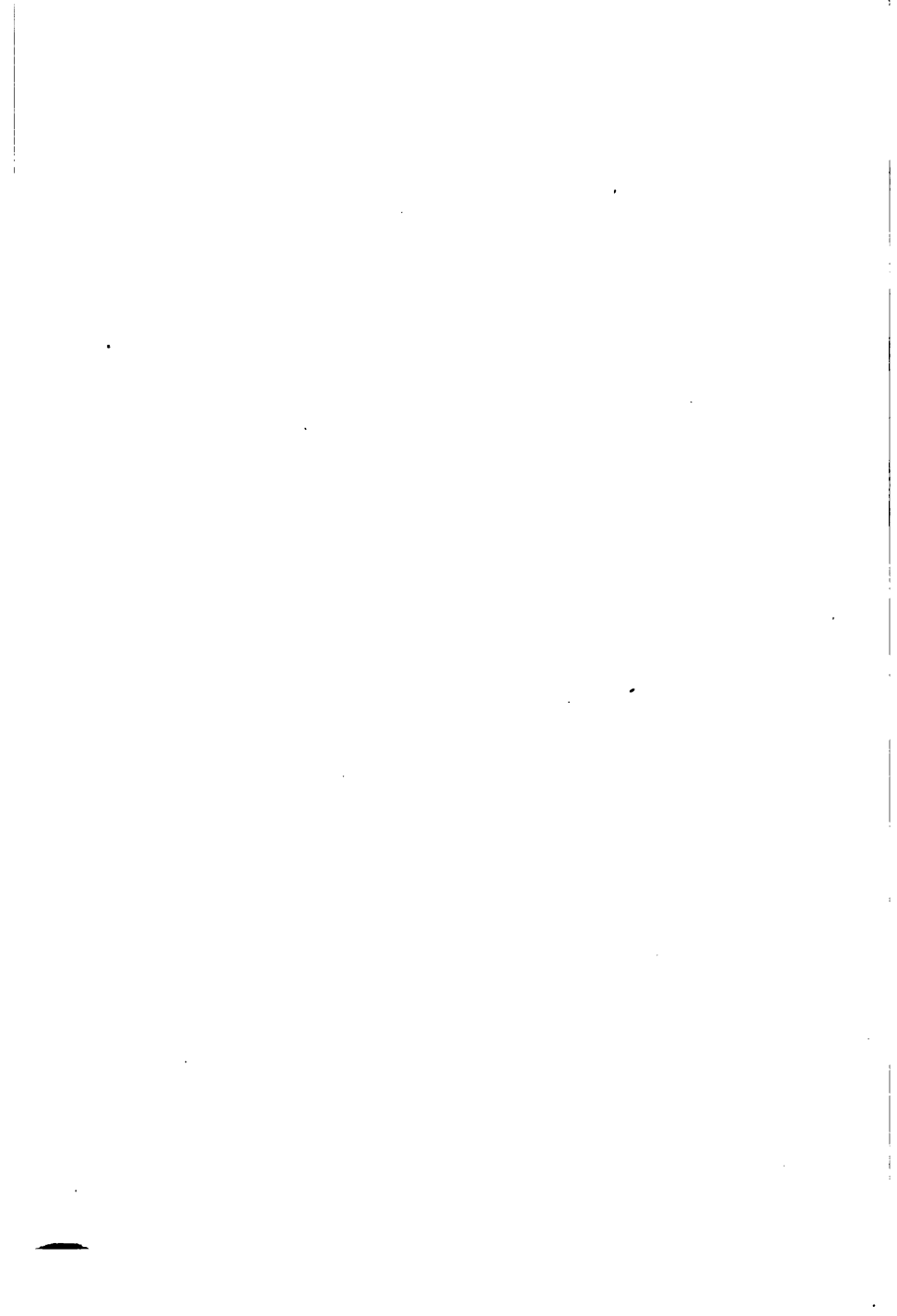
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JAN 1921



TO  
JANE GILMORE KNOTT  
AND TO THE MEMORY OF  
RICHARD W. KNOTT  
FRIENDS ENDEARED BY MANY HAPPY  
HOURS OF MUTUAL INTERESTS  
AND INTIMACIES

A. 3068.1.



## PREFACE<sup>1</sup>

### I

Though America's poetry criticism just now promises well, in spite of some incredibly deluded judgments, a constant protest arises against the "personal" nature of a portion of it. This portion largely emanates from certain poet-critics or poetry centres and proceeds under logical defenses which it should be interesting to examine. They are mainly two: One that "no permanent standards of judging poetry exist," and the other that "no satisfactory definition of what poetry is can be agreed upon."

The first of these assertions is in high favor

<sup>1</sup> This preface originally appeared in the *New York Times* Review of Books, in February, 1919. Two poems in this volume, also, appeared in a former volume which will not be republished.

with the "ultra-moderns"—whose extremism in poetry makes as dull reading as academicism itself. As dull, that is, to those "moderns" who hold that art freedom and finality no more spring from excesses than from conservatism. Who believe, on the contrary, that only a selective liberalism offers both the repose and unrest necessary to permanently interesting creativeness.

In calling attention to this, as I do, and to the fact that the creed of "no standards" seems self-destructive, I am not to be construed as opposing free verse movements. Such verse I have ever used—though not the unimpassioned, unimaginative, insufficiently rhythmical prose kinds, and not with the belief that it is a substitute for inspiration. Neither it, however, nor any quality of poetry old or new has any necessary bearing upon the assertion that "judging poetry is nine-tenths a matter of preference, not of applying standards." That assertion being merely a denial of all authoritativeness in criticism, inevitably destroys any

worth in its own practice — except such as comes from the mere pleasure of expressed opinions.

This would be admitted, but there is more. The tone of the “no standards” criticism rarely indicates that its adherents really believe themselves incapable of giving the reader permanent guidance or of exacting faith from him. On the contrary, an intolerant confidence in its rightness makes it impatient of all “preference” save its own. Practicers of it, therefore, are not only given an opportunity for expressing their personal equation, but find in it a shelter for much “preference” arising in friendship, enmity, or ambitious desire to boost the particular kind of verse they themselves write.

Further examination of the assertion cannot be attempted here, but this much concerning its origin can be said. Preference is fundamental in all judgment, as faith — according to Mr. Balfour’s famous argument — is the foundation of all belief. Most people, for example, prefer the beau-

tiful to the ugly, the true to the false, the noble to the base. But since times come when conventional imitations of the beautiful cause revolt to the ugly; when banality brings craving for the new, though it be false; or when the uninspiredly noble leads to choice of the decadent—the cry easily rises that no standards of judging poetry really exist.

These revolts are not surprising, and are often of value. What is surprising is that so many fail to see that the measure of our artistic sincerity and intelligence is not determined by revolt alone, but by the things to which we revolt—and by what we are willing to destroy. Art may depend on exasperation rather than inspiration to break its bonds, but exasperation is not inspiration. Only those extremists who take it to be so will ask us to believe that any prose dullness or absurdity articulated into lines and strung unlyrically before us makes something wholly important in poetry—something no permanent standards can judge.

The second assertion that poetry cannot be sat-

isfactorily defined is not confined to the ultra-modernists, though frequently used by them and other coterie critics in defending everything they choose to call poetry. Our inability, however, to arrive at a definition of poetry that will be as satisfactory as any other definition in this relative world seems due to several confusions.

The first of these is that some of us, instead of seeking to make our definition a scientific delimitation, make it a panegyric. When Keats calls sweet peas beautiful flowers "on tiptoe for a flight," he is not defining sweet peas, but magically praising them. So the recent prize poem defining poetry "a magic light that springs from the deep soul of things" is likewise praise — charming but not definitive.

Again, some demand that a definition shall be a touchstone enabling us to tell unfailingly what lines are poetry. This is like asking that a definition of gold should contain the name of the acid that detects its pureness.

Yet others, forgetting that all things are conditional, and that each must be defined in the undefined terms of others, ask for an absolute definition. Only a satisfactory working definition is required.

Finally, many do not realize that the main object of our definition is to distinguish poetry from prose, on the one hand, and from mere verse on the other. Or, if they do, they assert that, since all people through all time do not agree as to just what things are poetry, no satisfactory definition is possible. Yet experts should be able to define poetry as satisfactorily as other experts define stones or stars — provided they only seek a definition which is a descriptive delimitation of that art from any other with which it may be confused.

If these conclusions are right there is no reason why poetry experts should not as unanimously accept a working definition of poetry as experts in other fields accept other definitions. I offer there-



fore this analysis of poetry and a consequent definition:

Poetry on its formal side is an art of rhythm, metrical or unmetrical. This rhythm must differ from prose rhythm by being more lyrically or measuredly organized. So much is shown by its division into line-lengths, and by the fact that some prose has so many of poetry's other qualities that mere division into line-lengths will suffice to give it the additional lyric value which enables us to say it is poetry. This, however, is not the case with much so-called "polyphonic prose" which is merely camouflaged by rhymes, color-adjectives, and occasional metrical rhythms into a resemblance of poetry; as other prose is camouflaged into seeming poetry by being shredded into free verse.

On the other hand, and from the side of substance, there are many qualities — of imagination, passion, charm, etc.— which make poetry when they are embodied in a sufficiently musical rhythm. The degree of originality, felicity, or intensity of

these qualities, and of their rhythm, determines the worth of the poetry. For unless any lines in question possess some of these qualities in a measure so rare as to appeal to the real poetry experts of the generations, they must drop into the class of mere verse.

Nor does this principle fail if the supposed poetry experts of any generation fail to estimate a Shakespeare — as has happened; or if any prominent one or number of them prefer a Pope, as did Byron, to a Wordsworth, Shelley, or Keats. The critics of any generation may be right in their estimate of a poem, but only the continued survival of its lines for the experts of other generations suffices to give them final standing.

A definition of poetry, then, which will describe and delimit it from prose, on the one hand, and from mere verse, on the other, must take all this into consideration. It must, in addition, for brevity's sake, find a common term which will be inclusive of the many different qualities poetry may

possess. Such a definition — though doubtless a better can be framed — I here offer as adequate.

Poetry is the expression of our experience in emotional word-rhythms more lyrically measured or organized than those of prose, and having some permanency of appeal not possessed by mere verse.

Whether this definition be accepted or not, one thing is clear. We must get rid of the "twilight zone" around poetry in which irresponsible criticism can ambush mere likes and dislikes. This can be done by the common-sense recognition that judging poetry is not "nine-tenths a matter of preference." For although poets may transcend, or critics repeal, the laws of criticism of their predecessors, they can never abrogate the fundamental permanent standards of judging true poetic literature. Rareness of rhythm — just now stressed as if it were the whole of inspiration — and of passion, imagination, etc., are immemorial standards of judging, and to them all critics must, and invariably do, appeal.

## II

Another source of the critical confusion of both today and yesterday has been due, it seems to me, to the failure of critics to comprehend the fundamental relationships of realism, classicism, and romanticism — and the subvarieties of each. For that impressionism, symbolism, mysticism, idealism, transcendentalism, futurism, imagism, etc., are but varieties of these three fundamental divisions of poetry, or of other literature, can easily be shown.

An investigation of literary history would reveal, I fancy, that revolts against realism tend to pass through classicism to romanticism — and the circle is completed by the revolt from romanticism back to realism. This latter is a phenomenon we have recently been experiencing in the reaction against "Victorianism" — which is regarded as decaying romanticism.

A revolt from romanticism — or classicism — to realism is usually thought of as "a return to na-

ture," or to "the things of everyday life." This return, however, if put psychologically, means essentially a return to a literature of the senses. For realism is most largely concerned with the senses and sense-observation of life.

A revolt from realism to classicism means that the sensuous has become dull and unsatisfying, and that poets and public want more of the literature of the mind and soul.

A revolt from classicism to romanticism can likewise only mean that writers are no longer finding the things of the mind and soul sufficiently stimulating to the poetic faculty. Therefore they reach out into the marvels, mysteries, and wonders that surround life — even into the supernatural or cosmically unknown.

If realism is thus the literature of the senses, it is easy to see that impressionism, futurism, and imagism are but minor forms of it. Impressionism is the literature of sense impressions that are evanescent or atmospheric. Imagism is but static

impressionism stripped of atmosphere and subjectivity. Futurism but a clamor for sense impressions that are "primitive" or brutally real.

In like manner transcendentalism and idealism are but sublimated forms of classicism; and the kinship of symbolism and mysticism to romanticism becomes manifest. Symbolists either wish to express life mysteriously—"in a way that cannot be analyzed" the French Symbolists put it; or to express the mysteries of life under certain forms or symbols that will give them a suggestive concreteness. Mystics, on the other hand, are but romantics who mount out of sense, mind, and soul to some transcendent unity with the universe or God.

That this analysis is correct must, I believe, be admitted. With its critical recognition we should be better able to comprehend the need or value of changing from any one of these "isms" to another and the defects literary minds are likely to fall into in making the change. Mere rebels, for example, would not so easily be able to shout or

cackle as if by merely rebelling they had laid the egg from which all future criticism and creation must proceed. Rebels with a real variant of any "ism" could get a hearing without going through the confused process of overestimation and consequent underestimation at the hands of the academics. Finally, we should recognize that all "newnesses" in poetry are but variants of these three fundamental forms, and so be able more quickly to place them.

## III

For a basis from which to make comparisons of poets one word more may, perhaps, be added here. Every poet who is called by any considerable number of reviewers a foremost, or *the* foremost, poet of his country is naturally a mark for criticism by those poet-critics who aspire to his place. Or if criticism fails, to a boycott of silence — on the theory that an enemy who has achieved should not be advertised. And especially is this the case if such a

poet be an advocate of the full freedom of poetry as against the narrow autocracy of any "ism" which the aspirants happen to be riding.

As this kind of criticism is manifestly worthless, if not discreditable, I will venture to suggest an analytical comparative test that has served to restrain my own judgments, and that is at least universal of application.

I have believed that poetry without fundamental vitality is bloodless; without passion, fleshless; without spirit, nerveless; and without thought, spineless. I have believed that without direct natural speech it is cramped or crippled; without true musical rhythm, destitute of grace; without imagination, shorn of beauty; and without charm, of that lure which springs, perhaps, from a blending of some of these qualities — or of all.

Great poetry, therefore, it is evident, must possess many of these attributes, and the greatest at times seems to combine all. Which of them, on the other hand, any particular "ism" lacks, may easily



be determined by those who care to make the analysis.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The formula quoted in this discussion that poetry criticism is "nine-tenths a matter of preference" comes from Mr. Louis Untermeyer, whose critics have amply pointed out the uses to which he puts it. Mr. Untermeyer offers no definition of what poetry is—that might limit his "preferences" too much. But as he has espoused the Heine temperament, revolutionary socialism, the theory of Synge that poetry must become "brutal," and a belief that Whitman is the only poet whom the poet of the future should imitate, it is not difficult to estimate the comparative value of his judgments, preferences, and exclusions in the field of the twentieth century's poetry. That he adulates, also, the kind of verse he seeks to write, is of course intelligible.

It may be, as has been said, that Mr. Untermeyer is merely incapable of conceiving finality in poetry. Or, perhaps, as has been averred, it is the congenital poison of self-interest, partizanships and malice which vitiates his "preferences." In any case it has become evident to many that these preferences are as raw as the raw material which he usually judges to be permanent poetry, and that his judgments are rarely trustworthy, even in the sphere of his obsession, except when they follow the opinions of others.

In making these strictures, however, I must tell the reader that Mr. Untermeyer is acridly opposed to any praise given work I have done. To retaliate in kind on his own verse would, of course, be the usual thing to do. But the present-day practice certain poets have of reviewing the books of their friends or enemies seems to me more than questionable.

How far any such poet-reviewer is sincere, or how far he becomes, by omissions or commissions, that most con-

temptible of literary parasites, a petty thief of poetic reputations, is impossible to determine. But as there is no law compelling a critic to give credit to good work, nor any to prevent malicious attacks on it, the temptation is manifest. Consequently the spirit of telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, of both friend and foe, is rare with these poet-critics. And that of course is the basis of any criticism worthy the name.

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## **SHADOWY THRESHOLDS**





## A POET'S CHILDHOOD

### I

#### FIRST STEPS

A country village, night . . .  
A child stealing from home  
Along a lone plank sidewalk,  
Where stars and the eyes of cattle  
Stared thro the darkness at him;  
And where the whisper of trees  
Was conscience — till he had reached  
His father's store, and fallen  
Sobbing, tho triumphant,  
Into his father's arms.

### II

#### THE UNSEEN

What was the meaning of it,  
"Total eclipse of the sun."

Whispered about with terror?  
A shadow fell on the apples  
That scented the noonday orchard.  
And the child, too, was lifted  
To gaze thro a smoked glass at it.  
And tho he only saw  
The glass — not the moon's ghost  
Haunting the sun's vastness —  
Awes invisible swept him.

## III

## BIRTH

He swung, on the porch, in the rain,  
At his grandmother's, near.  
They had sent him there; for the doctor  
Had said he would bring him a sister  
From a secret hollow stump  
Somewhere in the owl-kept woods.  
They came for him, and showed him  
A little red sightless thing  
So new to the world that he fled —

Being too near, himself,  
To the Nescience whence it came.

## IV

## FIRE

With stolen matches they did it,  
He and his elder brother  
And the boy in the house beyond them.  
The hayloft door was open,  
And climbing they kindled the hay,  
For the peril of seeing it burn —  
Kindled and beat it out  
Each time . . . till sudden the air  
Was a frenzy of flame about them.  
How many a time since then  
Has he played with the peril of fire!

## V

## TRAVEL

He went at last on a journey  
With one of his father's drivers —  
Miles and miles, high-seated

On a hogshead of tobacco.  
All day the waggon bore them  
By fields and boggy bottoms  
To the market — the end of the world.  
And the next day, returning,  
Thro saddened woods at twilight,  
He heard the whippoorwill,  
And knew the first lone longing  
For things never to be.

## VI

## WOMAN

A travelling photographer,  
Tenting, came to the village,  
And with him, glad and golden,  
His little daughter of four.  
The boy, swept by a charm  
As old as the garden of Eden,  
Forgot the promised boon  
Of the camera's image of him  
For his image fondly shaped,

And henceforth to be sought,  
In the shining eye of an Eve.

## VII

## CRIME

Election day — August,  
The town thronged with the country,  
And first-pluckt watermelons  
Ripe to the heart with redness.  
Money to spend — and so  
A saloon door flung open,  
A rind flicked at a passer,  
A curse, a blade flashing,  
Then blood, the stain of the ages,  
On stones that seemed to the boy  
The altar of murdered Abel.

## VIII

## THE GRAVE

From a negro hut, glowing  
With supper fire at twilight,  
A mournful melody floated

To the boy, "I may be gone!  
I too, O Lord, tomorrow,  
In cold earth may be lying,  
Down in a lonesome graveyard . . .  
O Lord . . . how long!"  
The first sad witchery was it  
Of death to the boy . . . "How long!"

## IX

## CHURCH

He had only heard its bell,  
A far sweet quaver, calling  
Across the night or the morning;  
Or seen its shuttered whiteness,  
With legs of brick to stand on,  
And bonneted with a cupola —  
Like the spinster of his dread.  
They took him — and he heard . . .  
And, years thereafter, hearkened . . .  
But now he only worships  
Outside it, like the bell.

## X

## SCHOOL

"Two times two are four" . . .  
Did the grass and trees know figures?  
"Three times four are twelve" . . .  
Had the brook to count its ripples?  
He did not know: and yet  
So wise to him were the words  
It murmured, that all books  
For many a Spring thereafter  
Seemed but as prisons to punish  
Eyes made for the hills and heavens.

## XI

## GLORY

A sorghum mill, grinding . . .  
To the back of the horse that turned it  
The boy lifted, exultant —  
A dream come true at last.  
Grinding, grinding, grinding . . .

Till he tired of the height's loneliness,  
Of glory — that is only  
The going around in a circle  
Above the talk and the laughter.  
Tired . . . and yet thro the years  
Has mounted his dream, to grind.

## XII

## TRANSPLANTED

He was to move to the city!  
The garden fruits were gathered  
And sold; house things uprooted.  
The stage-coach, made of mud  
And creaks, took the boy in it —  
He little knew how far!  
The train, a marvellous terror,  
Swept the woods backward from it.  
The boat, on the flood of the River,  
Paused — and the boy walked forth  
From its ark to an earth of strangeness.



## XIII

## NOSTALGIA

Houses, houses, houses:  
And one, lonely among them,  
His father's, reached in the twilight.  
The boy wanted a barn  
And cows tinkling the meadow;  
But instead came clamor of firebells  
And of fire engines shrieking . . .  
Then a new hungering knowledge  
Of things irrevocable,  
Whose name is Nevermore.

## XIV

## CASTE

He sat on his gate gazing . . .  
And the church steeple opposite  
Was the highest thing in the world.  
But the Sunday-arrayed children,  
Who passed in snowy linen,

With ties and sashes flowing,  
Laughed at his rustic dress.  
He sat . . . and the curse of caste  
That has shrivelled all church steeples  
Shrunk his too — and sullied  
All high wonder in him.

## XV

## POETRY

A rainy day and the room  
Of the Public School crowded.  
Faces strange and alien  
From lands of the Pole and Teuton.  
A teacher pale and fragile.  
The name of the "great" Longfellow.  
Then words, "The vine still clings  
To the mouldering wall." Sadness:  
And the poet in him aching  
For the first time to be born.

## XVI

## CHILD-LOVE

At the corner she lived, the girl  
Who had taken his part when laughter  
At the village clothes he wore  
Was tossed at him by the others.  
Beautiful, lithe and free  
She was, brave and ready  
To follow him into perils.  
And he gave her his heart — nor knows  
Today if the love of a child,  
A youth, or a man, is divinest.

## XVII

## TRAGEDY

Summer days — and the day  
For a picnic into the woods.  
The tinkling mule-car took them,  
The girl, joy-bright, beside him.  
And all day he was her hero,

While daringly she followed —  
Leaping, as they returned,  
Once and again from the car,  
Leaping — at last to fall  
Beneath blind wheels — that taught him  
How little love is to death.

## XVIII

## THE BROKEN HEART

They took her away in the hearse,  
While he stood by, forgotten —  
Yet never more to forget.  
The water-plug on the corner,  
That once was a seat of dreams,  
Where he had waited for her,  
Was left unclaimed to the others.  
For now he had found the way  
To the immemorial pools  
Of healing — the heart's pools  
Of Silence and Solitude.

## XIX

## GOD

He ran far in the moonlight,  
Alone, gladly alone,  
Playing at "Hare and Hounds";  
And, after the hounds were baffled,  
Turned, moon-quieted, home.  
He sank on the grass and his gaze  
Floated far up the steeple,  
Up, then endlessly on —  
Till sudden it touched Infinity,  
Unfathomable — and God.

## FINITUDE

### I

One ruby, amid a diamond spray of stars,  
The coast light flashes;  
The tide plashes.  
Across a mile of bay-sweet land the moon  
Comes soon:  
She has lost half of her lustre and looks old.  
  
A cricket, finitude's incarnate cry,  
And the infinite waters with their hushless sigh  
Are the two sounds  
The night has:  
Each in eternal wistfulness abounds.

### II

I have wakened out of my sleep because I too  
Am wistful,  
Tristeful;

Because I know that half of *me* is gone,  
And that all frailty cries in the cricket's tone.

I have wakened out of my sleep to watch and listen.

For what?

To see for a moment universes glisten;  
To wonder and want — and go to sleep again,  
And die,  
And be forgot.

## THE COLONEL'S STORY

No, no, my friend; there is an agony  
Not to be exorcised out of the world  
By any voice of hope.— But I will tell you.

The *Sonia* was sailing without lights —  
Bearing three hundred souls — and without bells;  
For she had reached the “Zone,” where the Hun  
sharks

With their torpedo tongues could spit death at us  
Out of the inky sea-hells where they hid.  
On the main deck we stood, in a wind-shelter,—  
My wife, and by us a pale girl whose eyes  
Had all disaster in them. And my thought was,  
“ I hope to God the moon is shut so deep  
In cloud-murk there in the East that hurricanes



Can't blow her out of it." For in the Zone  
The moon had come to mean only betrayal,  
And now, if ever, was her wanton chance.

The slipping water soaked with soulless dark  
Fell under and around us shudderingly,  
Yet somehow brought an anxious hopefulness.  
"We're making twenty knots," I said; and felt  
Our bow cut thro the tangle of the waves  
As if the No Man's *Sea* ahead of us  
Would soon be crossed; and I, out to rejoin  
My regiment, could set my wife safe somewhere,  
And help again to stab that curst Amphibian,  
Autocracy — whose spawn in the sea gave it  
A terror greater than infinitude's.  
For God knows, with the woman that one loves  
Aboard a ship, and only a cloud perhaps  
Between the Hun's shark eyes and sure escape  
From the black icy fathoms that would choke her,  
There's little left within a man but nerves.  
So when I drew her closer into the shelter,

Out of the sheering wind, the life belt  
She wore seemed like a coffin in that sepulchre  
Of night and sea. And when the other, there,  
With the disaster eyes and pallid face,  
Turned it toward us, I was shaken as if  
The moon had suddenly walked out of her shroud  
With phosphorescent purpose to reveal us.

But on we plunged and tumbled, till at last  
The blank monotonous sink and swell lulled me  
To faith. And I was only thinking softly  
Of her — my wife's — first kiss on a summer night  
Under the moonlit laurels of our home,  
When came a cry from that wan girl gazing  
Frozenly on the sea — where the moon now  
Indeed was pointing at us pallidly  
A death-path. And my throat was gripped by it,  
That clutching cry, as if the glacial depths  
Down under us already had risen up.  
So starting toward the slipping rail I called,  
“What is it? where?” For, tense as a clairvoyant,

With eyes that seemed to feel under the tide  
The stealthy peril stalking us, she stood there.

After a moment's gazing I too saw —  
What she foresensed — destruction seething to us.  
"The boats!" I cried, "the rafts!" And stum-  
bled back

Over the streaming deck to her I loved.  
Then the shock came, as if the sea's wild heart  
Had broken under us, and ripped the entrails,  
The human hundreds out of our vessel's hold,  
To strew the foam with mania and despair,  
With shrieks strangled by wind and wave and  
terror.

And thro that floating, mangled, blind confusion,  
Where hands reached at the infinite then sank,  
Where faces clung to wreckage as to eternity,  
I sought for her who shared my life's voyage,  
Who had been my heart's helmswoman; and who  
now,

Wrecked with me, swirled, too, in the torn waters . . .

And soon I saw her, still by that wan girl,  
Tossed on a watery omnipotence.

Blind with brine I swam for her — as the moon,  
Her treachery done, again got to a cloud.  
Flung back by every wave, I fought; beating  
Against them as against God. And soon, somehow,  
Had reached to a limp body on the surge,  
Limp and strange — but living . . . and not  
drowned!

Then seeing a raft near, I struggled onward,  
Gulping the sea and being gulped by it,  
But finding arms at last that drew my burden  
And me from horror to half-swooning safety.

I could have died, I think, of the relief.  
But the moon came again, nakedly out,  
As if to see what she had done. Then I,  
Bending over the form that I had fought for,

And chafing it, saw . . . not her I loved!  
Infinite Cruelty, not her I loved! . . .  
But that pale girl, with the eyes of all disaster.

Oh, yes, I raved, and said God was a Hun,  
A Kaiser, of a Universe that loathed him.  
And back, too, would have leapt, into the waves,  
But the same hands that saved were ready to hold  
me.

## PEACE TRIUMPHANT!

*(November, 1918)*

Earth, Mother Earth, do you feel light flowing,  
Peace-light, waited so vainly and long?  
Feel the great blood-eclipse guiltily going,  
Swept from your face by a tide too strong?  
Over your rim is the bright flood rilling,  
Singing thro air, and under the seas.  
Never since birth was such a beam-spilling,  
Never such warmth, such healing and ease!  
Wildly it wraps you; and oh, your children  
Open their heart-gates to the glad rays!  
Blood-gloom there was, and blindness and hating,  
Now there is wonder, relief and amaze.

Earth, Mother Earth, it will loose away from you,  
Pestilence, famine, horror and pain.

Cleanse, and of loathed inhumanity calm you,  
Giving your veins well-being again!  
Sleep shall come back to your cities, chalets,  
To ships in the night when the watch-bell sounds;  
Sleep, the one opiate soothing Nature  
Sleeplessly pours upon mortal wounds.  
Sleep in the night and peace in the morning!  
Under their cool, strong febrifuge,  
Soon shall you swing again, thro clear ether,  
Hopeful — tho the price paid be huge!

Swathingly, too, shall delight surge back to you!  
For, like an incantation divine,  
News that the Slaughter-Sway, so black to you,  
Ceases, shall run to your heart like wine.  
Visions shall steal to your breast, ecstatic:  
Fathers again, by a fond home fire;  
Lovers, in green lanes meeting to murmur  
To the white stars their starry desire!  
Visions of cities that rise, from ruin,  
Proud to have given their life for a Gleam;

Lordlier rise, in glory and story,  
Over the grave of War's last dream!

Yes, Mother Earth, you have suffered; but sorrow  
Has brought you at last what *it* alone can.  
Races you had, that raged; but tomorrow  
Men on your sphere shall behold but man.  
Nations you had,— all strifefully claiming  
Food at your breast, and place in your arms,  
Isles that bejewelled you, and broad empire  
Over your lesser children-swarms.  
Nations you had; but now to one nation  
Fast they are merging — ready to say,  
For the first time, there is but one mother  
Of men — to be cherished by them alway!



## THRESHOLDS

Each moment is a threshold, each day and hour and  
year,

Of what has been, of what shall be, of what shall  
disappear.

And thro them slips the Universe, with still or  
throbbing tread,

From the mystery of the living, to the mystery of  
the dead.

Each moment is a threshold, that leads invisibly  
To grief that glooms, joy that looms, to dull satiety.  
We pass to them with passion, and out of them  
with peace,

And all the way is struggle, or rapture — and re-  
lease.

Each moment is a threshold, to Being's House of  
Breath,  
Or to the void, silence-cloyed, in Being's House of  
Death;  
But all we know of either in these words has been  
said,  
"Today we're with the living, tomorrow with the  
dead."

Each moment is a threshold, but God is in the  
House,  
God too, we think, somehow to link the Morrows  
with the Nows.  
Or if He is not, marvel! For man himself is God,  
Seeing a world that should be, within a soulless  
clod.

## MILLICENT PASSES

Don't let him be my pall bearer, don't let him! . . .

Yes, do! For I have loved . . . only him!

But him! . . . give me the morphia . . . And so

Altho I did, then, marry the other,

That half-man, half-squirrel in the cage

Of his small ego spun by smug conceit,

The man I love must bear me to the grave —

At the coffin's head, upon the left side,

That he may know how heavy my heart was.

— What a life! what . . . what a life!

And I was beautiful! . . . give me the morphia . . .

With brow and lips and eyes made to delight,

And with such joy to ripple in my laughter,

You have said so yourself, as only the lark

Winging can take the heart with — such wild joy:

Yet all so vain to hold him that I loved!

— And why, why, I ask . . . appeaselessly!  
Another woman has, and he is happy,  
Breathing in life as if it were a fragrance:  
While I for ten years watched that spinning cage  
Of the other whom I loathed — that squirrel soul,  
Which could not fancy why my heart grew bitter,  
And why I wanted to tear the sky to pieces  
And strangle the world in it; or why I pined,  
Altho all saw my love . . . of one who now  
Shall help — but that! — to lay me under earth.  
But that! . . . And yet, let him: on the left side,  
Where my dead heart with woe will be so heavy  
That it shall weight him down remembering.  
— What a life! what . . . what a life!  
A childhood torn by temper, rapture, tears;  
A girlhood by delirious ideals.  
Love — a happy day or two in the woods,  
The enchanted woods of it, thro which we pass  
And find our peace, or wander and are lost.  
Knowledge, then, that bliss is brevity.  
Then marriage to that other, at whose side

In the bed of earth I now must go to lie . . .  
Tho it is false, I say! . . . give me the morphia . . .  
That I first broke his heart, as mine is broken,  
And sent him there! False! . . . He but wore out,  
Spinning within his little ego-cage  
Of glib desires, that led to vanity:  
A cage so wearisome that when I lie  
In the earth by him and feel *it* spinning round,  
I shall scream out to God, if God there be,  
To let me forth, to set me free of him:  
For the shame of couching there will be so much  
That should the other send me death-flowers,  
And the wreaths of them touch me, even thro  
The coffin . . . they will wither, if they are lilies,  
Before the funeral words are spent. But if . . .  
If they are roses, and one is not white,  
Lay them upon my breast . . . give me the morphia.  
— What a life! What . . . what a death!  
Yet I could sing once — and was beautiful! —  
Sing! . . . melodies blossomed at my lips.  
But were birds, too, ill-mated, they would cease

In time to sing, they too — and boughs become  
As bare of music as my breast of peace . . .  
Which he I love will never cease to know,  
For still he loves music! . . . And when he bears me  
Out of those doors, will hear, perhaps, the strains  
Of that great funeral march — Chopin's, I played  
him —

Sounding within his soul's deep sadnesses —  
Hear, but only, only as if for another,  
Unless he feels my dead heart's heaviness.  
— It is too much! too much! . . . give me the  
morphia . . .

Not merely I should die, but all the living,  
All earth's abortive millions should lie down  
And say, "Whoever made us, God or Chance,  
Has but mismade us!" Then there would not  
surge

That crying out for love that never comes,  
True-mated love for all: which of all things  
Can keep faith's universe from falling apart,  
And prove God is the mystery that binds it.

Yet he I loved . . . he that I love, believes:

So I too must not pass from life unpraying.

Our Father, which art in Heaven . . . give me the  
morphia . . .

## THE BROKEN WINGS OF THE YEARS

You have broken the wings of the years, O Death!  
Because they were all too swift with joy.  
They fly no more from breath to breath  
Of happiness by, but trail and cloy.  
They fly no more — as the golden plover  
Flies, from the tundra's icy hover,  
Far, far south, with never a pause,  
To palmy zones of the Panamas.

You have broken the wings of the years — alas!  
So now their pinions, shaped to soar,  
Can only falteringly pass,  
With no goal left on any shore.  
They flutter along from hour to hour  
With no nest left in any bower:  
Migrants ever from care to care,  
Coming no whence to go no where! .



You have broken the wild wings of the years.  
No more they weather the gales of woe,  
But sink — sodden with sorrow's tears,  
Or veer with all despairs that blow.  
Too often out of the misty welter  
Of doubt do they in vain seek shelter;  
Too, too often fold with the night  
In sleep unfain of any light!

## SEA-HOARDINGS

My heart is open again and the sea flows in,  
It shall fill with a summer of mists and winds and  
clouds and waves breaking,  
Of gull-wings over the green tide, of the surf's  
drenching din,  
Of sudden horizon-sails that come and vanish,  
phantom-thin,  
Of arching sapphire skies, deep and unaching.

I shall lie on the rocks just over the weeds that  
grape  
The clear sea-pools, where birth and death in the  
sunny ooze are teeming.  
Where the crab in quest of booty sidles about, a  
sullen shape,

Where the snail creeps and the mussel sleeps with  
wary valves agape,

Where life is too grotesque to be but seeming.

And the swallow shall weave my dreams with threads  
of flight,

A shuttle with silver breast across the warp of the  
waves gliding;

And an isle far out shall be a beam in the loom of  
my delight,

And the pattern of every dream shall be a rapture  
bathed in light —

Its evanescence a beauty most abiding.

And the sunsets shall give sadness all its due,  
They shall stain the sands and trouble the tides  
with all the ache of sorrow.

They shall bleed and die with a beauty of mean-  
ing old yet ever new,

They shall burn with all the hunger for things that  
hearts have failed to do,

They shall whisper of a gold that none can borrow.

And the stars shall come and build a bridge of fire  
For the moon to cross the boundless sea, with never  
a fear of sinking.

They shall teach me of the magic things of life never  
to tire,

And how to renew, when it is low, the lamp of my  
desire —

And how to hope, in the darkest deeps of thinking.

## WANTING THE MOON

"Don't cry, don't cry for the moon!"

Her restive heart would croon;  
Her restive heart of delights and fears,  
Of laughter tangled amid her tears,  
"Don't cry for the moon!"

For she wanted the moon herself; wanted  
The shimmering moon of wealth and love,  
The moon of rank and fame that haunted  
The heavens above her.

She wanted the moon, and so would sing  
To any, with odd caprice, "Don't cry!  
Don't cry for the moon!"—betraying  
Her own appeaseless sigh,

"Don't cry, don't cry for the moon!"  
It broke her peace at last.

It broke her mind and it broke her heart,  
And she died in a place that is set apart  
For the moon-criers — who do not know  
That the moon 's for none — only its glow;  
Only its even radiance, cast  
On all, with aimless art.

## K'U-KIANG

Because the sun like a Chinese lantern  
Set in a temple of clouds tonight,  
I was back in K'u-Kiang!

Because in a temple of dragon clouds,  
As if with incense misty red,  
It hung there over the rim of the sea,  
I was back in a narrow street,  
Where amber faces pass all day,  
Going to pay, going to pray,  
Going the same old human way  
They have gone for a thousand years, men say,  
In K'u-Kiang.

And I heard the coolie cry for his fare,  
I heard the merchant praise his ware

Of bronze and porcelain set to snare,  
In K'u-Kiang!

I saw strange streaming signs in black  
With gold and crimson on their back —  
Opiate signs in an opiate street;  
Where the slip and patter of felt-shod feet  
Is old as the sun;  
And the temple door  
As cool and dark as the night.  
And where dim lanterns, swinging there,  
As a lure to human grief and care,  
Half reveal and half conceal  
The ancestral gloom of the gods.

I saw all this with sudden pang,  
As if by hashish swept or bhang,  
Because the sun, like a Chinese lantern,  
Set in a temple of clouds!



## THE OLD PIONEERS

The frontiers freeze before us;

Now youth is left behind,

Tho once they ever lured us

To braver vaster valley-lands.

The ice of them is round us,

A hope-arresting rind;

Our feet must travel slower,

And slower thaw the mind.

The frontiers freeze before us,

The dead leaves shiver round us,

Our breath is less within us,

The way is hard to find.

The frontiers freeze before us:

They once were blossoming

With faith and virid vision

Like faery and enchanted lands.

## THE OLD PIONEERS

The bliss of youth was on us,  
And every dream could bring  
Such ardency as melted  
All fear that fate could fling.  
The frontiers freeze before us,  
The sun sets sooner round us,  
The night is darker in us,  
Our hearts forget to sing.

The frontiers freeze before us,  
And will not melt again,  
But ever shut us closer  
Within the narrow bounds of them.  
So now there 's only left us  
The half-way things of men,  
The staked claim kept securely,  
The aims that all may ken.  
The frontiers freeze before us,  
The long wait now is on us,  
Until death's frontier calls us  
To pass the *final* fen.

## A FLORIDA INTERLUDE

*(Naples-on-the-Gulf)*

### I

Behind me lie the Everglades,  
The mystic grassy Everglades,  
Where the moccasin and the Seminole glide  
In secret silent Indian ways.  
Before me lies the Gulf,  
The cup of blue bright tropic waters,  
Held to the parched lips of the South  
To cool and quench its thirst.

Behind me lie the Everglades,  
Before me lies the Gulf,  
Which the sunset soon shall change to wine,  
A Eucharist for the longing soul.

Its rim of land shall be transformed  
To Mexic opal and chrysoprase,  
And then shall come the moon  
As calm as a thought of Christ.

As calm as a thought of Christ —  
Over the cup's sand-rim enchased  
With palm and pine, Floridian friends,  
Saying their twilight litanies;  
While homeward flies the heron  
To his island cypress in the swamp,  
Which Spanish mosses drape and the moon  
Silverly soothes to peace.

## II

Behind me lie the Everglades,  
Where the bittern wails to the moon's face.  
Peace is gone as I wake  
And memory in me wails  
From the primal swamp, Heredity,  
Whence I have come with all the desires

Of creeping, walking, flying things,  
To creep or walk or fly.

With all the desires of the earth-creatures;  
Yet with a want transcendent,  
A want that comes with the glimmer of stars  
And pierces to my heart.  
A want of the life I have not known,  
Of the life unknowable,  
In the Everglades of the Universe  
Where the Great Spirit glides.

## NAQUITA

"Naquita," he said, "Naquita,  
But one thing do I ask:  
Bear my dust to the wide plains  
And scatter it to the four winds,  
That it may ride the mesas,  
The buttes and the red arroyas,  
And not be shut in a small tomb,  
An inn for all comers —  
Whose host, the harrowing worm,  
Sets no fare forth at all,  
Save for himself, but silence."

And so I took his body  
Of death-made alabaster  
And bore it, in obedience,  
To the place of cruel burning.

I gave his lips to a flame  
Stronger than any passion,  
And his eyes, that held wide heaven  
And all eternity for me.  
And I went back to the mesas —  
Bearing the world — and God —  
In a little urn of dust.

And then — oh hunger of love! —  
I was stricken and could not do it.  
“If I scatter his dust,” I said,  
“I scatter my soul to madness.  
For if his heart were blowing  
On the windy buttes and mesas  
My heart would follow after.  
But here in a grief-gray urn  
I still can hear it beating,  
I still can clasp it to me.  
He still must wait to ride!

“For a little while must wait,  
Till the flame shall take me too,

And our twin dusts commingled  
On the swift mount of the wind  
Shall follow all trails that flesh  
Can never, never follow.  
Yes, over the Plains hurtle  
Afar, flame-wedded atoms:  
Till the last wind shall cease,  
And dust no more be dust,  
And life and death be one."



## AFTER THEIR PARTING

*(A Woman Speaks)*

You know that rock on a rocky coast,  
Where the moon came up, a ruined ghost,  
Distorted until her shape almost  
Seemed breaking?

Came up like a phantom silently  
And dropped her shroud on the red night sea,  
Then walked, a spectral mystery,  
Unwaking?

You know how, sudden, there came a change,  
When she had left the sea's low range,  
Its lurid crimson, stark and strange,  
Behind her?

How, sudden, her silver self shone thro,

Tranquilly free of the earth's stained hue,  
And found a way where the clouds were few  
To bind her?

You know this? Then go back some day,  
When I have gone the moonless way,  
To that dark rock whereon we lay  
And waited;  
And when the moon has arisen free,  
Your soiling doubt shall fall from me,  
And eased of unrest your heart shall be,  
And sated.

## LIFE'S ANSWER

A stroke of lightning stabbed the storm-black sea,  
As if it sought the heart of Life thereunder,  
And meant to put an end to it utterly; —  
Then came thunder —  
Wildly applauding thunder.

Riven with fear the foam-crests ran before it,  
Hissed by the rain and beaten down to darkness.  
A gull rose out of the murk with wings that tore it —  
Life's answer to the storm's terrible starkness.

## HER HERO

"There's not a flower of April but shall ring me  
A wedding bell," her bridal heart said,  
"A wedding bell of bliss when he comes home.  
And if they bring me  
His name among the dead,  
I shall not go in grief — only but in pride  
That he shrank not, but as a hero died!"

So to her task she bent; till, it befell:  
They brought her his name, set to the brief knell,  
"Somewhere in France, dead."  
And tho a shell of burning anguish  
Shattered her soul's trenches,  
Her pride tremorless towered.

Yet there in France, at the grey break of dawn,  
A firing-squad, with faces fixt and drawn,  
Had only set her "hero" against a wall  
And, at a command . . . shot him, for a coward.

## AN AVIATOR'S MOTHER

I wake in the night,  
And sudden my eyes grope,  
High thro the dark of the battle-fields,  
For the place where he is flying  
Thro thin perilous ether.  
In cold dizzy heights  
Over the foe I see him,  
His soaring plane in a swirl of clouds hidden,  
And he, my little boy,  
Who once crawled at my feet,  
Nor dared to take three steps across my chamber,  
He the eagle soul of it!

Ah yes, I see and hear him,  
There in the earthless chill,  
With iron talons ready

To release swift bombs on sleeping Rhine cities.  
And tho I know  
That some of them may fall  
On simple homes where children dream  
As once he dreamt beside me,  
I cry him on thro the sky's sickening hazard —  
That Freedom may not perish,  
And a myriad martyr mother-hearts  
In the years to come be wakened  
By the high whirring wings that mean destruction.  
I cry him on!  
And yet how terrible  
That out of the nest even the young must spring  
To be — thus — Humanity's wild war-eagles!

## WINTER FLOODS

Half under the flood are the trees by the river,  
The wind is not happy,  
The branches shiver,  
The dark ice-floes are hurrying down  
Like heaps of heavy death.  
The hills, brown-hazed, with the trees tremble,  
The sun is dazed  
And the clouds dissemble.  
Spent is my trust, and longing rust  
My heart with every breath.

Half under the flood are the trees — and in them  
Crows that scold  
At the skies and din them.  
Worn is the wind and writhen the waves  
With the trouble of tales he tells.



A skiff unmoored from its cove is skirling,  
Oarless and aimless,  
Mutely whirling —  
Even as thoughts, unmoored in me,  
On a tide that mystery swells.

Half under the flood are the trees — and bushes  
Drowned deep  
In the drift that pushes.  
Out of them whirrs, migrant again,  
The wild duck's watery wing.  
"Swift to the South!" my heart cries after  
Her strained flight  
With a strained laughter.  
For I am chilled, I am winter-filled,  
An exile far from the Spring!

## DAWN-BLISS

*(Naples-on-the-Gulf)*

I went out at dawn,  
Pelicans were fishing,  
Big-beaked, grey and brown;  
Little waves were swishing.  
Clouds creamed the sky,  
As shells creamed the shore;  
Wild aery hues of beauty  
Round seemed to pour!

I went out at dawn,  
Pelicans were floating,  
Big beaks on their breasts;  
Up the sun came boating.  
"Ship ahoy!" I cried,

To his golden sail.  
Bliss-winds of beauty in me  
Broke — to a gale!

I went out at dawn,  
Pelicans were winging.  
Palms waved passion plumes,  
Beach sands were singing.  
Stripped, save of strength,  
I plunged into the sea  
And swam, till the bliss of beauty  
Died away in me.

## FAIR FLORIDA

O sweet is the earth in Florida,  
The darkies croon all winter in the clearing.  
The wind sighs a day-long cheery *Ah!*  
A sound in the palms worth hearing.  
And the sun there never seems to hurry,  
The night never comes too soon,  
And easy from the heart slips worry,  
When the moon comes stealing there, the moon,  
When the moon comes stealing in Florida!

The gold of the orange in Florida  
Hangs round and ripe all winter in the clearing.  
And rarely the soul breathes a weary *Ah!*  
For little has the world worth fearing.  
The firefly summers in December,

And toil, there, is never too long,  
And the heart all day can remember  
How the moon comes stealing with a song,  
How the moon comes stealing in Florida!

## TO A SUICIDE

How did you like your grave last night,  
Did you sleep well, my friend?  
There was cover enough for you, I know,  
For over the earth was laid the snow;  
And only a while did the wind blow,  
Or the trees bend.

How did you like the grave you made,  
To slip into from life?  
Had it the quiet that you sought?  
The silence, free of sound and thought?  
The isolation undistraught  
By the old strife?

And was it empty, as you believed,  
Of sense, of soul, of God?

Was there no reckoning — or rue?  
Were you with all at last quite thro?  
Nothing to want? nothing to do?  
Only the clod?

Or was there Something there which bade  
You rise and walk afar?  
Out of the shroud, out of the flesh,  
Out of the earth's soul-tripping mesh,  
Rise and start with strength afresh  
On a new star?

That were impossible, you thought —  
Sure but of sleeping well.  
Yet while a bud awakes in May,  
While darkness blossoms into day,  
While life seems more than atom-sway,  
Who can tell?

## I KNOW YOUR HEART, O SEA!

I know your heart, O Sea!

You are tossed with cold desire to flood earth utterly;

You run at the cliffs, you fling wild billows at beaches,

You reach at islands with fingers of foam to crumble them;

Yes, even at mountain tops you shout your purpose  
Of making the earth a shoreless circle of waters!

I know your surging heart!

Tides mighty and all-contemptuous rise within it,  
Tides spurred by the wind to champ and charge  
and thunder —

Tho the sun and moon rein them —

At the troubling land, the breeding-place of mortals,



Of men who are ever transmuting life to spirit,  
And ever taking your salt to savor their tears.

I know your tides, I know them!

"Down," they rage, "with the questing of men, and  
crying!

With their continents — cradles of grief and de-  
spair!

Better entombing waters for them, better our deeps  
unfathomed,

Where birth is soulless, life goalless, death toll-less  
for all,

And where dark ooze enshrouds past resurrection!"

Ah yes, I know your heart!

I have heard it raving at coast-lights set to reveal  
you,

I have watched it foam at ships that sought to defy  
you,

I have seen it straining at cables that cross you,  
bearing whispers hid to you,

Or heaving at waves of the air that tell your hurricanes.

I know, I know your heart!

Men you will sink, and shores will sing; but a shore  
shall be man's forever,

From whence his lighthouse soul shall signal the  
Infinite,

Whose fleets go by, star after star, bearing their  
unknown burden

To a Port which only eternity shall determine!

## NOX MIRABILIS

I wonder if earth is led at night by spirits,  
That swim in space before it,  
As was our ship that night on the Red Sea,  
When dolphins swam in the phosphorescent bow-  
wash,

With a beauty of body-motion more than earthly,  
And lured us on, with a lithe and ghostly radiance,  
In and out and under, magically;  
And when stars hung so humid in the heavens  
As to make their soft immeasurable spaces  
Seem but another phosphorescent sea,  
With the pointed bow of the moon-boat pushing thro  
them?

I wonder if earth is beautifully led so?  
For if it be, I will ask of destiny

To let me, when I am changed into a spirit,  
Swim at its bow, shaking a luminous sense  
Of mystery and ethereal magic back  
To those who have taken passage from the port  
Of Birth, thro the Red Sea of Life, to Death.

## FLUTTERERS

In the moist flowing midnight of our garden  
Does the firefly, who lights, there, its sundial,  
Of time's silent mystic numbers know?  
As little as do we of heaven's dial,  
Which faint eternal star-flies enkindle  
With constellated wandering and glow!

At our mute open window does the grey moth,  
Who beats toward a warm sense of brightness,  
Conceive the vastity of life's desire?  
Less than do we — whom love's elusive urgency  
Ever allures with wings of want to flutter  
Toward Life's unappeasive blossom-fire!

## SHIPS AND THE SEA

I have been thinking of ships and the sea again,  
Ships and the sea!

Of flooding surf and joy to be free again,  
Fever-free.

I have been thinking of white foam blowing,  
Of gulls dipping, of tides flowing,

I have been longing for winds past knowing  
To wing by me!

I have been thinking of white sails vanishing  
On the blithe blue,

Till from my heart their beauty is banishing  
Care's harsh hue.

Till I can hear in the wave's far ringing  
The changeless, charmed, ineffable singing

Of Life, the siren immortal, flinging  
Spells ever new.

I have been thinking of ships and the moon again,  
Ships and the stars!  
Of swinging bows and a world in tune again,  
Of tall spars  
That point toward ports that are dreams — till wak-  
ing  
At dawn there comes, on the glad gaze breaking,  
Ultimate peace from a green palm shaking  
By coral bars.

## IMPERTURBABLE

Three times the fog rolled in today, a silent shroud,  
From which the breakers ran like ghosts, moaning  
and tumbling.

Three times a startled sea-bird cried aloud,  
On the wind stumbling.

But I cast my net with never a fear, tho wraiths in  
me

And birds of wild unrest were stirring and starting  
and crying.

For I knew that under the sway of every sea  
There is calm lying.



## A TRAVELLER, LOOKING BACK

My heart was sick to see them  
In all their mingled wonder,  
The Orient lands and peoples,  
And so at last — I went.

And now I'm like a lover  
Whose first love long has faded,  
Yet who would give all glory  
To feel its fire unspent.

To feel, as then, dawn hueing  
The snows of Fugiyama  
To immaterial ruby,  
Then to a priestly white.

To watch the amber evening,  
With crimson sun setting,  
Along the walls and towers  
That gave Peking its might.

To see the first palm swaying  
In strange Kualalumpur,  
To hear the wind-bells tinkle  
On stranger Shwe-Dagohn.

To watch along Sumatra  
The Bay of Bengal counting  
Its fevered pulsing surf-beat  
With timeless undertone.

To gaze, then, where Benares,  
With ghats and temples shining,  
With saints and yogi surging  
Resounds to Vedic hymns;  
Where Taj Mahal's three bubbles  
Blown magic on the morning  
Bewitch the road to Agra,  
That in enchantment swims.

And, last, behold the Sphinx smile  
To Egypt and Sahara,  
Or the eternal tenting  
Of Pharaoh's pyramids.

Or, down the Mount of Olives,  
Toward the Gate called Golden,  
Watch how the Slavic pilgrim  
So reverently thrids.

To see — as once I saw them! . . .

Ah, not in any faring  
To phantom-far Sumatra,  
To Shwe-Dagohn or Taj,  
Shall I again recapture  
The first keen quivering magic  
That for a mystic season  
Made all else seem mirage.

## A CHANCE ENCHANTMENT

In far-off China I heard it,  
As we paused by a city of the desert,  
Whose hosts of sand, blown ever by the wind,  
Climbed high over crenelated battlements  
That had beaten off Genghis Khan.  
And it fell upon the air there softly,  
A low eerie Orient *tinkle* . . .  
And I never shall know from whence it came,  
From what strange thing with what strange name:  
But even as a dewdrop catches the sky  
It seemed to have caught the vast numb cry  
Of the ancient sorrow of China.  
It seemed to have caught, in a single tone,  
A sorrow, a beauty, an alien moan  
That never will let my heart alone

Till the sands of time sweep over it.

In far-off China I heard it,

Where the desert winds go by!

## HERAT

The city of Herat  
Has five great gates;  
The Kandahar, the Hutab-chak,  
The Malik and Irak;  
And on the east the Kushk Gate,  
Thro which the sun came,  
When Herat was a splendor  
And not a ruin's name.

The city of Herat  
Has four great walls,  
For caravans and strange bazaars,  
For mosques and tall minars,  
For sepulchres of saints and khans  
In gardens strewn with streams —

Whose names are now forgotten,  
Or but as dreams of dreams.

The city of Herat  
Is one mile square,  
But one — yet all the bales of fate  
Have entered in its every Gate,  
Have crowded in its four walls  
And gone the ways of time;  
And now Herat knows only  
That it has been sublime.

## A MOHAMMEDAN TO THE MOON

It is well, oh houri of Allah,  
That you draw an aery veil  
Of silver over your face,  
Lest I should gaze too long  
At a beauty overstrong,  
And so become unfitted  
For a mere human place.

It is well that, in His harem,  
You lean from a lattice of stars  
I never can hope to climb.  
For were I lifted near  
To your loveliness, I fear  
My soul would seek to ravish  
You from Him, O Sublime!



It is well, oh houri of Allah!

And so I do but pray

That you tell Him this for me:

That never within the sky,

His palace, do I espy

Your shape, without adoring

In you His deity!

## A PRIEST'S SONG

*(India)*

Mango wood and deodar wood  
And sandalwood and aloe wood  
Are sweet and good to make incense  
For any temple shrine;  
And crystal from the camphor tree  
Distilled, with rose and patchouli;  
But better than these are simple thoughts  
Of hearts that are divine —  
Of hearts that look on life and say  
With fragrant pity night or day,  
“ My brother's grief and woe, I know,  
Are, even as well, mine! ”

## NIPPONESE

A dim inleted coast  
Where pine-trees tend on temples  
That look out over the sea  
For the sun 's coming and moon 's going,  
For wind and rain and snow,  
Whose elemental voices worship  
Thro the encircling year.

And out on the sea a sampan  
Floating, as if awaiting  
To bear away from the temples  
The pleadings of the importunate,  
The incense of their yearnings,  
The offerings of their toil and pain,  
The flowing of their tears.

## A WORD'S MAGIC

Do you remember Etajima,  
And how, upon a moon-fogged sea,  
As ghostly as ever a tide shall be,  
We passed an island silently?

And how a low voice in the gloom  
Of the temple pine-trees leaning there  
Said *sayonara* to one somewhere  
Unseen in the shadow-haunted air?

Just *sayonara*: but it seemed  
The soul of all farewells that night,  
The sigh of all withdrawn delight,  
The sound of love's last rapture-rite.

And now, after long years, it comes  
Again from isles of memory

To bring once more to birth in me  
The breath of all lost witchery.

Yes, one low word of parting, now  
Echoing, thro the fog of years,  
Has touched my heart with beauty's tears,  
And youth thro all things reappears.

## A CHARM TO BRING CHILDREN

(*Egypt, 100 A. D.*)

Take twelve leaves of the male palm  
And write on each the name of a god.  
Wed each leaf to a lotus bloom  
And bind the twain to a bulrush rod.  
Walk with the stem betwixt your breasts  
By the flooding Nile when the young moon shows,  
Shadowy-pregnant, over the night.  
Then — making the sign of Horus —  
Thrice to the left and thrice to the right —  
Call to the wind of the Desert,  
*Great is the lady Isis!*

## HEARTS TO MEND

Said the warm South Wind,  
"Have you any hearts to mend?  
I have salt from the sea,  
I have solder from the sun,  
I can make them good as new,  
(Have you any hearts to mend?)  
They shall hold again the dew  
Of youth when I am done!

"Have you any hearts to mend?  
I have come from the South,  
And a heart that is sad  
Or asunder with the years,  
I can make as good as new,  
(Have you any hearts to mend?)  
Hearts rent with fate or rue,  
Hearts torn with throbbing fears?

" I can heal them all again.  
I have salt from the sea,  
I have solder from the sun  
For the broken or the worn.  
I can make them good as new,  
(Have you any hearts to mend?)  
I've the skill of dreams come true  
For the wretchedest who mourn!



## HUNGER

The million twigs of the trees are black, against the  
gray of the twilight.

Only the slender moon is alive and slips thro them  
away.

All else is wintry numb,

All else is wintry dumb,

For even the squirrel knows that he cannot dig his  
earth-hid store,

So hard is the frost; but keeps to his hole and does  
not peep from the door.

I alone am hunting food — for my soul, in the  
faded sky-light,

I alone walk with the moon till she glides behind  
the day.

Food, and want of love, are the never-ending needs  
that haunt us.

Love I have and food — but the mind and heart  
and soul are strange.

Their hungers sweep from afar;

They crave a dream or a star;

They crave a food that neither winter nor spring  
nor autumn hold,

That words can never, in all the worlds where  
speech has bloomed, unfold.

Nor shall an eternity have satieties enough to daunt  
us,

Life's inexhaustible mystery still will make our  
hunger range.

## JUDGMENT

*(During a Blizzard)*

Today the City has put on ermine  
And sits in the court of its thoughts  
To judge if the Wind, whose icy dagger  
Is piercing the life of the poor,  
Is chief of the cold conspirators  
In league with the felon, Death.  
And the sentence is: *Not guilty*,  
Tho word newly has come  
Of a child bitterly frozen  
At a mother's milkless breast.  
For the City, judging, knows  
That not the Wind, but itself,  
And itself alone is the murderer.

## MY NEIGHBOR

I did not know my neighbor. Two back yards  
And an alley were the gulf that lay between us.  
His face across that gulf I had not seen;  
Only his lighted windows sent towards  
My window all his wonted ways of living,  
Dull, as they seemed; perhaps a little mean.  
He was no more to me than shapes that give  
A shadowy human fringe to thought's existence.  
He could have died and I should not have missed  
More than his movements, vague and fugitive.  
— Then came the crashing horror of his fate.  
He had walked there with passions in him burning  
Such as made Œdipus of the gods learn  
To count no man, till death, as fortunate;  
He had grown plants within his kitchen garden  
While tragedy grew in him desolate:

Grew till he could no more its twine retard,  
But tangled in the tendrils that wound fiery  
About his heart — the tendrils of desire —  
Had cried aloud, and then, with lips set hard  
— Had gone to a drab rendezvous of sin  
To meet again his mistress, whom in frenzy  
He fancied false to him; as passion when  
Remorseful will; and told her she had been  
For the last time a lure and should no longer  
Be let to live and snare the lust of men.  
And so, tho her eyes pled against the wrong,  
Had kissed her, cursed her, shot her — then, sore  
weeping,

Himself: meaning to put all sin to sleep  
Past any pain's distress, however strong.  
— But in this too had failed; for even as *she*  
Did death prove but a weak perfidious wanton,  
Turning the bullet from his brain aslant  
Into his eyes that never more shall see.  
So doubly now in prison lies my neighbor,  
In that of blindness and of felony.

Which ended what, you see, was like a play  
For me — since two back yards and one small alley  
Sufficed for a gulf, an infinite interval,  
Between men made by God in the same way.

## CHANT TERRESTRIAL

How old on the spheral earth is man?

How long was it ere a sudden thought

Severed him from his brother-beasts,

Taught him to walk,

Taught him to talk?

How old is he on the spheral earth?

How old shall he be when earth is cold

And gives to the dead moon ray for ray

Of blue chill phosphorescent mould?

How old on the spheral earth is man?

Does he a thousand earths in space

Inhabit, and, uncertain why,

Face to the sky,

Face, and die?

How old is he on the spheral earth?

How old shall he be when time has rolled  
Across Creation's birth-expanse  
The last star life and death enfold?



## AN INTERIOR

Because you cannot sit with me  
And read a book when night has come,  
But press your hands upon your breast  
And give your eyes to all unrest.  
Because at windows and at doors  
You glance, and wait the least wind-tap  
Of pines against the prescient pane,  
And if it does not come are fain,  
Suddenly starting from your chair,  
To go and see what may be there,—  
I know that you can only care  
For that which is not anywhere.

For that which calls without a voice,  
For that which moves without a shape,  
For that which wills without a choice;  
For passion that is yet escape.

## THE COURTESAN

I sell my body to all men,  
Even the priest has purchased it,  
With such an ecstasy, I swear,  
As he denies the Infinite.  
No crucifix has ever known  
Such kisses as my lips enthrone,  
And since I can from thence divine  
That men, who are the "sons of God,"  
Most worship at the flesh's shrine,  
I can be sure, beyond distrust,  
Of one truth more, That God is Lust.

## THE SISTERS

Three tall chimneys out of my window rise,  
Like the Fates, the daughters of Night,  
With the smoky tangle of their hair about them.

In the grey sky or the blue sky,  
In sun or rain or snow,  
They stand, blended together, shadowing human  
destiny.

For one rises above the making of cradles,  
And one above the weaving of worldly raiment,  
And one, darkly apart, above the sad shaping of  
coffins

For the frailty of those whose thread of life is  
shorn,

Who are cut off swiftly, suddenly,  
And shrouded under the lasting garment of earth.

Three tall chimneys out of my window rise.  
Round them the city is born and lives and dies.

## HIS DREAM

I saw a dead man yesterday  
With a dream frozen upon his lips.  
Like one made of immortal clay  
He lay:

As if a vision vast and dim  
Had touched the heart and soul of him,  
As might the wings of seraphim  
In flight.

Yet the one vision of his life  
Had only been, I found,  
To earn, by an unceasing strife,  
Ten dollars weekly for his wife!

## MISTRESS IMMORTAL

Ah, little moon!  
When I see you there  
Enceinte in the West,  
Bearing a promise  
Of light to be,  
I know all lovers  
That beauty lures  
Have been, somehow,  
Your paramours,  
Little moon!

For softly you enter  
The chambers of all  
Or meet them silverly  
In the wood —  
Where leaves, little poets

Of the green trees,  
Are ever inspired  
By every breeze. . . .  
Or on the streets you accost them.

And then there is nothing  
To do, if lonely,  
But give their passion  
To you only;  
To you, little moon,  
Little girl moon,  
Who lure all hearts —  
You only!

TO RICHARD W. KNOTT

*(December 27, 1917)*

Dead, you are dead, my friend?  
Is all your being hushed?  
Your mind of torrent might,  
Your heart of hot insight?  
Dead? Never again  
To fight as a man with men?  
Your soul so swiftly flushed  
Now into silence crushed?

Dead? This is the end?  
No rising more at dawn  
To fling tense phrase and thought  
Onto the page, and on?  
No rising up to flash,



Out over the questing throng,  
The word that should be penned,  
The warning brave and strong?

Dead? and the city round  
Now muffles low your name?  
Some with affection's knell,  
Some with regret or blame?  
Some with a lie, yet all  
With deep-enforced respect  
For a strength none could neglect?  
For a freedom none could tame?

Dead? Oh, I am hurt,  
Who loved you, fought you, praised.  
I am hurt, and all amazed,  
And dazed, bitterly dazed.  
For friendship knows that death  
Will come, yet calls it crazed  
When one beloved is glazed  
So swiftly by its breath.

Yes, I am hurt, hurt,  
And numbly know the loss,  
And how death's dreadest blow  
Comes *after* the grave's woe.  
For where shall I find years  
Again such ties to twine  
As bound your ways to mine?  
I shall not — well I know!

Yet peace: your task is done,  
Full-hearted to the last.  
Citizen, lover, friend,  
Your laurels are amassed.  
Citizen, hater, foe,  
Thinker and scholar, go!  
And let who has not failed,  
Nor ever humanly ailed,  
Nor once a false hope hailed,  
Small honor to you show!

## CLAIRVOYANCE

The clock, like a heart, beating in the night  
darkness,

Is filling the house with the pale flow of time,  
That pulses plangently thro the thick silence  
Into each hall and chamber . . .

And seems to waken the shadowy past  
And the voice of vanished voices,  
And the laughter of them and the sorrowing sighs  
and tears.

And, like a clock, my heart is filling *you*,  
O body-house of me,  
With the flow of years that are gone:  
In every vein calling to life again  
Grey memory shapes vanished from sense and soul;  
And out of the Nowhere softly strangely assembling  
Vain vibrances and voices of Nevermore.

## NIGHTWARD

The crake cries lone on the brink of the bog,  
The heron mounts from the mists of the pool,  
The time for the owl to see draws near,  
The time for the bat to flit in the cool.

The stars grow ripe for the moon to reap.  
The hour of the moth is the hour of thought.  
Why is a leaf that lifts, and is still,  
With a sense of infinite sadness fraught?

## A FLORIDA BOATING SONG

Down thro Florida keys,  
    From island, to island!  
Down thro Florida keys,  
Where mangrove roots dip in the seas!  
A myriad tangled roots  
    From each palmetto byland,  
Oyster-encrusted roots mid which  
The heron wades in the shallow shades!

Down thro Florida keys,  
    Around them, between them,  
Thro low green Florida keys,  
So low they scarce seem born of the seas!  
Where pouchy pelicans roost  
    On cypresses that lean them  
Out over the idle lap of the tide  
That comes and goes with balmy flows!

Down thro Florida keys,  
Thro mazes on mazes  
Of ripple-encircled keys,  
Where sun and wind play as they please!  
Where the eaglet, high in air,  
Or the wild white ibis, dazes  
Eyes that follow them up the blue,  
As the heart would do, the heart too!

Down thro Florida keys  
I 'm going, I 'm going!  
Thro low green Florida keys  
And greener glades of Florida seas!  
And this is all I know,  
That all in the world worth knowing  
Is joy like that of the tarpon's leap  
In air divine with the warm sunshine!

## UNFATHOMABLE

On all the seas of space  
New worlds forever come,  
And old forever go,  
With mystic ebb and flow.  
On all the seas of life,  
There is such wax and wane  
Of mystery and pain  
As make us deeply know,—

That not God's very self  
Can fathom the Universe:  
To Him as unto us  
It is incredulous.  
Such vastity it has  
That His infinitude  
Can only thro it brood  
And ask *why* it is thus.

## AN EVENING ETCHING

Little rivers at twilight,  
Little wintry rivers,  
Running between brown trees  
With mistletoed branches;  
Catching dark shivery shadows  
Of boughs into your bosoms,  
And a pale silvery star  
Between burnt clouds of gold . . .

Little lowly rivers,  
How sad your spirit shimmers!  
All the land's rainy loneliness  
Is running in your flow;  
While farm-lights faintly quiver  
And brown hills freeze about you  
And the music of the sheep-bells  
Falls silent in the fold.



## A HEART'S CRY

I think of mountains  
In lonely shapelessness  
Under the twilight  
Of far countries.

I think of the drop  
Of precipices  
Thro deathly thousands  
Of feet of darkness.

I think of the torrents  
That shatter the silence  
With tortured turbulence  
Far down in them.

Yes, and of glooms,  
Of granite chasms,

## A HEART'S CRY

Where God Himself,  
God even, is lonely!

And then I moan . . .  
For never a spot  
Has earth as lonely  
As is my heart!

Never a torrent  
Torturing silence  
And cutting thro granite,  
As grief thro me!

Never a gulf  
So deep with terror,  
As sudden remembrance  
That you are dead!

## A MODERN STOIC

Questions scuttle across his brain  
And gnaw like rats at his heart,  
Gnaw — as if it were cheese.  
For philosophy can not trap them,  
Its doors spring open again.  
And forgetfulness is futile,  
Since cracks of memory come in it.  
And the golden bars of love are weak,  
Too weak to shut them out.

So scornfully he endures  
The feeding of each doubt,  
With a dull, silent sense  
Of a deeply accepted universe;  
And waits till his heart, withered with age,  
Is left to dry indifference.

## **PATHS**

**Crushing in my hand  
The bay as I pass,  
Drinking in its fragrance  
With the sea's scent,  
While gull-wings write  
Poems white and fast  
On the blue sky  
That is soft with content;  
Crushing in my hand  
The bay and the juniper,  
While I record  
Each line the gulls write,  
I go by the sea path  
Down to the sea's edge,  
I go by heart paths  
Deep into delight.**

Simple is my joy  
As the little sandpiper's,  
Who follows beside me  
With silvery song;  
Blither than the breeze,  
That skims great billows  
Nor knows how deep  
Is their flow — or strong.  
Simple is my joy,  
A sunny sense-sweetness,  
Full of bird-bliss,  
Bay-warmth, spray-leap.  
Mysteries there are  
And miseries beneath it,  
But sunk, like wrecks,  
Far down in the deep.

## NEED OF STORM

*(Naples-on-the-Gulf)*

On the green floor of the Gulf the wind is walking,  
Printing it with invisible feet;  
The tide is talking.

Purple and grey the horizon walls them round  
With purpler clouds.  
They wander in it like guests gently astray  
In a house deep mystery shrouds.

I do not know the speech of the tide,  
For too articulate have become my years:  
Beauty brings only words, not breathless tears.

So the young heron fishing there in the foam  
On the sand's edge,

Would once have taken my spirit far, far home  
To the infinite, when he vanished thro the gloam.

But now I am left behind on the beach — a shell  
That no more knows the wonder of the sea's swell,  
Or more than the empty echo of its knell.

To sea then, Life, wildly to sea with a storm  
Sweep me again,  
From the smooth dull beach of custom where I lie,  
That I may feel once more  
The swaying surge of passion thro me swarm!

## MOMENTS

### I

#### A GREEK, DYING

(B. C. 400)

Come nearer, Charon . . .  
I cannot step so far, into your boat.  
For I shall need some breath to say farewell  
To her you waft me from,  
Ere death sets us afloat.

### II

#### A CHINESE POET

(*By the Whang-Ho*)

Today the lightest breeze  
Takes tribute from the trees,  
Golden leaves flutter down,  
Crimson leaves, purple, brown,  
On the tide, past the town . . .



Down!

I walk along the shore,  
Like many gone before,  
And sadly ask, What matters it,  
One leaf, or life, more?

### III

#### DIVINATION

I gaze deeply into the sky's crystal,  
Longing to read the years.  
I see clouds swirling there . . .  
A bird quiver across them . . .  
Then out of them, falling, an autumn leaf.

The cloud-swirl I have known;  
The quivering bird have been;  
Am I the falling leaf? . . .

## IV

## MOMENTS

A crow caws,  
On the pine tops,  
In the sun.  
Silence.  
Eternity seems begun.

Again the caw,  
Where the pine tops  
And sky blend.  
Shrillness.  
Eternity seems to end.

## V

## A PAGAN'S CREED

I will not boast, for the wanton Gods are strong,  
And the Fates have many a secret ambush laid,  
Yet to myself alone will I belong,  
And of myself alone will be afraid!

## VI

## YOUTH

Gazing into a crystal of joy-dew  
Youth sees all heaven shining for it, blue,  
Till clouds begin to pass in darkling strife,  
Then the dew falls, and, lo, it sees — life!

## A MODERN CHANTEY

All around the world I have heard tides soughing,  
Under pine or palm, over rock, reef or sand;  
North, East, or South, where the night's quick at  
snuffing  
The candle of the day out, with an creepy hand!

All around the world! And I hope to God I'll  
never

Fossilize on a shore, or rot in a town.  
Evolution in the brine began, the wise assever.  
Let it end when men no more in ships to sea go down.

Chorus: *When no more*  
*Men no more*  
*In ships to sea go down!*

## SONGS TO A. H. R.

### I

#### FREE

O were your heart not wide, dear,  
And were your soul not high,  
And were not both so deep, too,  
Deep as the April sky,  
I should not find love freedom,  
But know a need to range  
All heaven and hell — a prisoner  
Pining for space and change.

But since there 's depth within you  
To hang my moon and stars,  
Since I have not to beat vain wings  
Against offending bars,

I find all other spaces  
That lie *beyond* our love  
Are prison — all alluring worlds  
Below me or above.

## II

## STILL!

Glassed in the sea  
The gulls glide past,  
Boats swing at anchor,  
Full is the tide —  
Full as my heart,  
Now waking at dawn,  
Of love for you  
Who sleep at my side!

All thro a night  
Of soft moon-fall  
Thus have you slept  
With tidal breath.  
Wake, oh awaken,

The darkness is gone,  
Light, that is love,  
Still masters death!

## III

## CALLS

Bird calls bird in deeps of the woodland,  
Love calls love in deeps of the heart..  
Over green meads we go to the music  
Out of the glad May earth a-start.

Cloud calls cloud to dance on the skylands,  
Dream calls dream to dance in our eyes.  
So it has been with a million lovers,  
So it shall be, till the last love dies.

## IV

## THE OLD NEED

Tonight I saw the new moon, while the vesper bells  
were ringing,  
A slender silver breath it seemed, swung on the  
April skies.

Soft apple blossoms under it in white throngs were  
springing,  
And blossom-thoughts of you within my heart be-  
gan to rise.

I saw the moon, I heard the bells, I felt the silver  
rapture  
Of stars that soon would blossom on the purple  
tree of night.  
But from a Universe in bloom I only sought to  
capture  
Soft-petalled words — but three — to tell again  
love's vernal might.

## V

## WHEN

Some night we shall come here  
For the last time,  
Hear the last whippoorwill,  
Watch the last firefly,  
See the last hill



Die into the darkness,

Ere is made the moon.

Some night we shall come here . . .

Shall it be soon?

Some night we shall come here,

Then — never more.

One of us shall have gone,

Over earth's last hill,

Infinitely on:

Out into a Vastness

Whence a lesser glow

Even than the firefly's

Back to us can flow.

Some night we shall come here,

Then the one left

Shall not dare hark again,

Or upon stars gaze,

But shrink, bereft,

Backward from the heartbreak

Hid in memory.

Some night we shall come here . . .

When shall it be?

## TO THE AFTERNOON MOON, AT SEA

Take care, O wisp of a moon,  
Vague on the sunny blue above the sea,  
Or the gull flying across you  
Will pierce your veil-thin shape with his sharp  
wing!

Take care, or the wind will wilt you,  
As he does the clouds snowily drifting by you,  
And diffuse you over the sky, a silvery mist,  
To give more cool to the day!

Take care, so near the horizon,  
Or a phantom skipper, one who has long been  
drowned,  
Will reach above it and seize you  
And make you his sail to circle the world forever!

134 TO THE AFTERNOON MOON, AT SEA

Take care, take care! for frailty

Is the prey of the strong, and you, a wraith of it,

Have yet a long while to go before nightfall

Brings you to sure effulgence!

## INSUBSTANTIALITIES

A misty moonlit sky, a moonlit sea,  
A soul moonlit, the misty soul of me,  
And nothing else but a sigh of misty air  
And a firefly like a drop of phosphor-dew  
Hung on the humid dimness — then, not there.

All is a dissolution and a dream,  
A world that is not but can only seem,  
A world of mist distilled from moonlit space  
And insubstantial save to an earthless soul  
That in moonlight can find a biding-place.

## THE HERDING

Quietly, quietly in from the fields  
Of the grey Atlantic the billows come,  
    Like sheep to the fold.  
Shorn by the rocks of fleecy foam,  
They sink on the brown seaweed at home;  
And a bell, like that of a bellwether,  
    Is scarcely heard from the buoy —  
Save when they suddenly stumble together,  
    In herded hurrying joy,  
Upon its guidance — then soft music  
    From it is tolled.

Far out in the murk that follows them in  
Is heard the call of the fog-horn's voice,  
    Like a shepherd's — low.  
And the strays as if waiting it seem to pause

And lift their heads and listen — because  
It is sweet from wandering ways to be driven,  
    When we have fearless breasts,  
When all that we strayed for has been given,  
    When no want molests  
Us more — no need of the tide's ebbing  
    And tide's flow.

## FULL TIDE

Sea-scents, wild-rose scents,  
Bay and barberry too,  
Drench the wind, the Maine wind,  
That gulls are dipping thro,  
With soft hints, sweet hints,  
With lull, lure and desire;  
With memory-wafts and mysteries,  
And all the ineffable histories  
Made when the sea and land meet,  
And the sun lends nuptial fire.

Sea-foam, and dream-foam,  
And which is which, who knows,  
When all day long the heart goes out  
To every wave that blows,  
That blossoms on the bright tide,



Then sheds a shimmering crest  
And yields its tossing place to one  
Whose blooming is as quickly done —  
For beauty is ever swift — begot  
Of rapture and unrest.

Sea-deeps, and soul-deeps,  
And where shall faith be found  
If not within the heart's beat  
Or in the surging sound  
Of the sea, which is the earth's heart,  
Beating with tireless might;  
Beating — tho but a tragedy  
Life seems on every land and sea;  
Beating to bring all breath, somehow,  
Out of despair's blight.

## ON THE MAINE COAST

The rocks, lean fingers of the land,  
Reach out into the sea  
And cool themselves, all day long,  
In the tide drippingly.  
They catch the seaweed in them  
And the starfish on their tips,  
And gulls that light  
And the swift flight  
Of swallows skimming grey and white —  
And sometimes sunken ships.

The moon, God's perfect silver,  
With which He pays the world  
For toil and quest and day's unrest,  
Is washed on them and swirled.  
And avidly they seize it,

Then let it slip away,  
Only again  
And yet again  
To grasp at it — as eager men  
At joy no hand can stay.

## SÉANCE

Hovering wings of terns  
Over the rock-pools flutter,  
For the tide, ebbd far out,  
Seems to stumble and stutter;  
Seems like a spirit lost,  
Unable to come again  
Back to the wonted ways and days  
Of ever-wanting men.

And the moon, a medium  
Trance-pale, is laying her light  
Over its surge — till, lo,  
It turns from the deep and night.  
And the spirit-word it brings  
Is the message of all time,  
That doubt is only the ebb of faith,  
Which ever reflows sublime!

## OVERWORN

" Shall I ever sleep again? " he said, in the night-time.

" Health is gone, hope gone, and joy is looking back at me!

Looking with forgetful eyes at a dear delight-time,  
Ere the slug of age, and of slow despair's blight,  
Had trailed, thro my heart, disillusion's sullen  
slime!

" Shall I ever sleep again? My life 's a weary hour-glass,

That empties, and turns again, and empties, without cease,

While leaf, then snow, falls, and April bud and  
flower pass

Around the heavy sands of it, that only have the  
power

To sigh, every grain of them that slips thro me,  
    ' Alas! '

" Shall I ever sleep again? Ah yes, I am but tired  
    now,

Overborne, overworn, with reaching or regret.  
And hope's hue, sleep's dew, that in the murk are  
    mired now,

Will rise thro my heart again until it is inspired  
To rest above the cry of the when, why and how! "

## EXTREME UNCTION

*(In a French Hospital)*

1917

"Is Anyone there in Heaven?"

She asked, with her eyes on a star.

"Is Anyone there to hear me?"

I am Jeanne Marie Cinquemars.

Is Anyone there? I am dying,

And since death may end all,

I would only know"—she listened—

"If France shall live or fall!

"Is Anyone there? I have given,

Or lost, all a woman can.

And now I am dying—ravished

By one who once was a man.

Is Anyone there to hear me?

Then let my enemy

Be shriven — but me never

If France dies utterly! ”



## A WAR WINTER

(1917-1918)

Like unaccoutred armies on the hill  
The trees stand shivering in the wintry chill.  
The crows fly to them, couriers of ill,  
Saying each field is ice, and every rill.

And the wind hurls

A blast of death

With every breath.

The sky pours down a wheeling white barrage  
Of hail and snow; and a grey camouflage  
Of gloom is sent — a creeping cold mirage  
Of the bleak night  
That hides wild hosts  
In dark outposts.

Twilight is settling like the death of God  
Upon an earth that 's but a frozen clod,  
And that a deeper pall of snow will sod,  
    Burying deep  
    All trace of Him,  
    From rim to rim.

## TO AMERICA AT WAR

O my America, I could avow  
None ever had a country till this hour,  
When men have found within their hearts the power,  
Fighting for more than country, to endow  
The souls of Liberty, half-born till now,  
With strength to link the patriot's lesser plea  
Unto the larger of Humanity —  
Which sees at last that war must end, and how!

Fight, then, the fight for Freedom, as of old,  
And even more for Union! For, apart,  
Nations will ever stab each to the heart,  
And Freedom for a pottage mess be sold.  
Fight for the greatest flag ever unfurled,  
For one to encompass you — and all the world!

## STORM AND LULL

*(During the Great Battles of July, 1918)*

Last night the sea was lashed by rain  
And swept by fog — as were the fields  
Of battle by fierce shell and gas —  
But now wide calm has come to pass.  
The lighthouse, listless, white, and lone,  
Stands on the foreland sterilely,  
As if it never would need again  
To bleed its warning ray to men:  
Stone does it seem, and only stone.

The clouds hang on the sky as still  
As windless, rainless tatters can,  
Empty of aim and void of stress,  
Of memory and forgetfulness.

Neutral upon a sea and sky  
That have declared neutrality  
To every warring element,  
They do not even seem forespent,  
Nor fain either to live or die.

There is a gull somewhere a-wing  
And smoke on the horizon line,  
To tell me hunger is not dead  
Or life put utterly to bed.  
In the blue coma of the sea  
And air they seem a karma, left  
By the old world to recreate  
Another — that shall meet its fate —  
And pass on to heredity.

And even as I gaze the strange  
Reincarnation has begun,  
The wind has swept away the sun,  
The calm is like a dream undone.  
The lighthouse lowers, the waves glance

With a new birth-cry, and I feel  
Life, reawakened to its fate  
From a brief moment's opiate,  
Surge on to victory in France!

## TO PRESIDENT WILSON

*(October, 1918)*

Woodrow Wilson, master of patience,  
Master of silence, master of speech;  
Master amid the world's war-frenzy  
Of clear wisdom's inward reach;  
Watcher of raging civilizations  
Till the one righteous hour arrives  
When you can speak for all nations,  
Great is your guidance now that shrives  
Both friend and foe of base soul-gyves!

Woodrow Wilson, lofty listener  
At the great heart of Destiny;  
Hearing above all feverous hatred  
Justice breathing what should be;

Still for a peace that shall not perish

Stand — for if ever a Providence

Comes from the Universe to nourish

Men in their woe, and lead them hence,

Near us now is its Immanence!



## THANKSGIVING, 1918

Gray flights of cloud pour from the North,  
But khakied leaves, skirling,  
Are swept by the wind forward,  
Or leap high up at the branches  
As if with a last desire for life,  
Ere beaten down in the forest  
They lie — to be blown away into brooks or hollows.

Then lo, I am giving thanks —  
As cloud and wind cease —  
That now our khakied lads in the far Argonne  
No longer are leaping up to fall forward,  
And be beaten down in the bloody mire and tangle  
Of the Forest's undergrowth,  
But are glowing with victory-warmth in Luxem-  
bourg!

## A REVOLUTIONIST'S DESPAIR

*(During the Bolshevik Reign of Terror)*

Wanton, and more than wanton, is this world,  
That can debauch all virtues of the soul;  
Ravage the fairest dream ever unfurled  
By Faith; of virgin Hope take any toll.  
That with hot hands of rioting can rape  
Freedom, until anarchic and unclad,  
She stalks, over restraint, a shameless shape,  
Murderous and licentious, sheerly mad.  
That even of Humanity's pure bride,  
Pity, can make a bitter prostitute,  
Ready to entertain Revenge and Loot  
When she has seen a people crucified.  
Yes, ready even to force, at their pain-call,  
Her sister virtues like herself to fall!

## A MOTHER'S DIRGE

Hurry, O gulls, across the sunset,  
Hurry off to your far sea-home!  
Cry as you fly, nor ever once let  
Night take you, and wild sea-gloom  
(For the wind and tide are rising!)

Wilder darkness *has* overtaken  
Me: no wings had I to escape  
Death, whose breath as a pall was shaken  
Over my boy's sweet soldier shape  
(While the battle-tide was rising!)

## POET AND PEOPLE

Farid, the Sufi poet, the maker of attar of roses,  
Was seized by a soldier of Genghis, whose hordes  
ravished the East;  
Was set for sale in the market; and heard the cry  
to the buyers,  
“ Who gives me a thousand dirhams? who covets a  
poet-priest? ”

And answer came, from a passer, a scorner of mys-  
tery-mongers,  
A shah for whom a rose was a rose, and the soul  
of it but dust,  
“ I buy him, to keep my dung-hill, his Allah-lays to  
find there;  
For says he not that Allah in *all* things must be —  
must? ”

"Take him!" the captor answered.— But "Hold!"

Farid cried proudly,

Swept by a sense immortal, song oft thro him had  
sent.

Then, as his exaltation compelled his captor's wonder,  
der,

"A fairer bid will follow!"— The passer mocking  
went.

"Then who, who bids for the poet?"— Again a  
passer answered,

"I! . . . A bundle of fodder!" . . . Farid was  
flung from pride,

From faith that he was immortal. And so to the  
soldier said he,

"Take it, for I am worthless. Allah in me has  
died."

"Lying dog of a rhymster, die too, then!" raged  
the captor,

And down at his feet struck him, with scurrile  
scimitar.—

*So does the world, in passing, its poets blindly  
slaughter;*

*So do its poets, doubting, fall ever from their star.*

## SAID CHANG WU

Said Chang Wu, in his need,  
"Kings are of a godly breed,  
Surely of a godly breed,

In China!

For the last of Kubla's line,  
Kubla with successors nine  
To his throne of Kaan-Bali,  
Is the idiot, Toghon Timur.

"Him four hundred million bow to,  
Humbly bow and kow-tow to,  
As he sits, solemnly,  
In exalted idiocy,  
On his throne at Kaan-Bali;  
As he sits and takes tribute,  
Gold, jade and ruby stones,

Broken hearts and broken bones,  
On a dais built to be  
Tartar, eternally,  
From Yenking to the Yellow Sea.

"Aye, most surely," murmured Chang,  
In his need,  
"Kings are of a godly breed  
In China!"



## TO POETS WHO DESPOND

Sailing west, ever west,  
Columbus suing his anxious quest  
Saw dawns come and days go,  
Dawns and days, how many and slow,  
Nor ever a land sighted!  
Then a dawn came, when on the air  
He saw bird-wings around him, fair  
And full of promise of a new world  
Where his ship's wings could rest, furled,  
And his dream's faith be righted!

And so, poets, even so  
With us it is, long do we go  
Sailing the seas of lone desire  
Nor ever, ever seeming nigher  
The land of a new vision!

Then sudden the wings of thought are stirred  
Before us, like that promise-bird,  
And soon we know we are near the shore  
Of a song that never was sung before —  
A song from lands elysian!

## YOUNG APRIL

April leaf-led; hills flower-spread;  
And the little day-moon right up over head!

April bee-strewn; bird and brook tune;  
And right up the blue the little day-moon!

April as far as the last hills are,  
And every flower in her lap a star!

April a-swoon with the sky's clear boon,  
And, for her soul, the little day-moon!

## OLD LOVE AND NEW

Last night shut in from wind and wet,  
And seeking somehow to forget  
How rain brings wanting or regret,  
We toyed, half-wistful, with the planchette.

First there was nothing; then it said  
That you had come back from the dead,  
And that you knew how I had wed  
Another — put her in your stead.

Reproach I looked for, then, from you;  
And so, between old love and new,  
I wondered which my heart would do,  
Choose living rose or buried rue.

But no reproach — if you were there,  
Touching my heart with the sweet air

Of strangeness I had thought so fair  
In all our years of joy or care —

No word's reproach or jealousy  
Slipped thro the table's spiritry;  
Tho where your arms were wont to be  
Hers softly throbbing clung to me.

No! But all free of bitterness  
You only said with the old stress,  
"Do you remember Inverness  
And the bluebells?" — no more nor less.

And yet too much! For all night long  
Amid the wind's half-moan, half song,  
I heard bluebells in a bent throng  
Toll sadly! I have done you wrong!

More wrong, being untrue and slack,  
Than I can know! For you may lack  
Immortal love . . . The thought is rack.  
Would that again I had you back!

## VANQUISHED

Out upon you, mockingbird, how can I sing  
That life 's but a sorry thing, a stale thing, and  
flat,  
A bitterness, a barrenness, a dry and desert spring,  
While your heart is rilling a note as pure as that!

Out upon you, optimist, wild philosopher,  
So sweet in unreason, so irresistible,  
That my darkest logic dissolves to but a blur,  
And I swear that Nature of bliss alone is full.

## **A GAMBLER'S GUESS AT IT**

**What are the stars but dice of God  
Flung on the night's uncertain sod?**

**What is the stake He lays with Fate  
But whether Life 's for love or hate?**

**What if He loses to the Foe?  
Forfeit we — and He — must go.**

**What if He wins? Security  
For all thro all eternity.**

## THE CHIME-MASTER'S SONG

My heart is a bell, and joy beats in it,  
A bell, moulded  
By hands sublime,  
And hung to sound, for one brief minute,  
High on a beam  
Of the towers of Time.

My heart is a bell, and Life can ring it,  
When love bids,  
Or at beauty's call;  
With such wonder can sway and swing it  
That its Maker  
Is heard in all!



## RESURGENCE

I was content, O Sea, to be free for a space from  
striving,

Content as the brown weed is, at rest on rocks in the  
sun,

When the salt tide is out, and the surf no more is  
riving

At its roots, or swirling and bidding it sway where  
the white waves run.

I was content — with life, and love, and a little  
over;

A little achieved of the much that is given to men  
to do.

But now with your tidal strife do you come again,  
vain rover,

And tell of vastitudes to be sailed, or sounded, anew.

Now again do you surge. And the fathomless tides  
of thinking.

Of wanting, waiting, despairing — or daring —  
with you come.

The inner tides of the soul, that had ebbd with  
slumberous shrinking,

But now are bursting again, thro the caves of it  
long numb.

So vainly I lie on the cliff with the blissful Blue  
above me

And listless sated gulls afloat below on the swells,  
For I am soothless, sateless, because of desires that  
shove me

Out and away with the winds, on quests no distance  
quells!

## THE GREATER PATIENCE

The passionless and imperceptible drifting  
Of clouds that come where no wind seems to be,  
That rise as if some need of earth were lifting  
Them on, to bring her fields fertility,  
Is like this moving thro the soul of me  
Of thoughts that seem of some magnetic need  
At the heart of life to come, and drop their dew,  
And bring the fruitful words that men call true.

What is it you would tell me, O great skies?  
That imperceptible is God's intent?  
Coming as if its quest were never meant,  
Yet bringing forth such fruit as never dies?  
And do you therefore vow the impatient weave  
But doubt; the patient only can believe?

## AFTER THE SYMPHONY

The last finale had crashed,  
A surging shower of iridescent vibrance.  
And as the musicians sighed and rose  
To drift away thro the night,  
Their tired instruments, glinting no longer,  
Catching no longer enchanted rhythms  
Into their breasts of wood and brass,  
Were laid away in case and cover,  
Husht.

The violins slept;  
With rhythm-dreams fitting along their fibres.  
The flute with an aria  
Lingering yet at its vents,  
Like a disembodied soul at earthly haunts,  
Lay still;

And still lay the clarionet and sad oboe  
In the leathern dark that swathed them.

Then I heard speaking,  
Started, I think, by a viola,  
"How much Beethoven has said in his Fifth!  
Had he but told us a little more  
The meaning of all life's Minors  
Would surely be open to us!"

A piccolo sighed, "Perhaps."

To which a cello mourned reply,  
"No; you forget Tchaikowsky!  
Chords cannot plumb the ultimate meaning of  
sorrow.

The 'Pathétique' is poof that grief and wrong  
Are discord-atoms, element-powers,  
That enter all being darkly.  
Resolve them away, we may,  
Ever into the Major,

But ever, as mist to moors, they return,  
Blindly to brew their bane.

Meanings are but illusions that vanish,  
Mysteries only abide! "

" Then," said a blunt bass-viol,

" Illusions are better, tho briefer!

Bach, with his clarity, for me!

The strong crisp creed of a fugue,

Free of all doubtings, achings, searchings,

Sure at last of completion! "

" And of immortality too? " asked an oboe,  
With reedy quaver.

" Would indeed it were so! . . .

Would we could round life off

To a circle of perfection! "

" But since we cannot," rang a horn,

" For wishes are not wonders,

Why do we whine of meaning and mystery!

What do these matter! *Power* is all!  
Strength to shout to the heavens  
That we are masters of them  
As long as we breathe of earth.  
For Death and the Dead are equals — both are  
dead! ”

From the drums a volley echoed, “ Both are dead! ”

Whereon was hushing,  
But not ceasing;  
No more peace or ceasing  
Than follows the rattle of clods on a coffin.  
For all waited the word of their leader,  
The violin, whose voice reverbs  
The hope and despair of the world.

And softly it began, . . .  
As if the thronging memories  
Of a thousand symphonies stirred it:  
Of allegros that ran like youth

Before slow-aging adagios;  
Of scherzos, that dissolved in the arms  
Of funeral strains, to be borne away  
On the solemn hearse of silence:  
Softly it began, . . .

“ We play but ill, comrades,  
And blind to the Score’s beauty,  
Else neither meaning nor mystery  
Would overmuch trouble us!  
Great joy can only come to the griever,  
Great grief, to the rejoicer.  
So only they who are resonant  
With both, and who sound harmonies  
That waken harmonics infinite,  
Only they play well!  
Be the clef what it may, then,  
Be the time brave or broken,  
There is a rhythm alwheres  
Of mingled Major and Minor  
For those with soul to seize it! ”



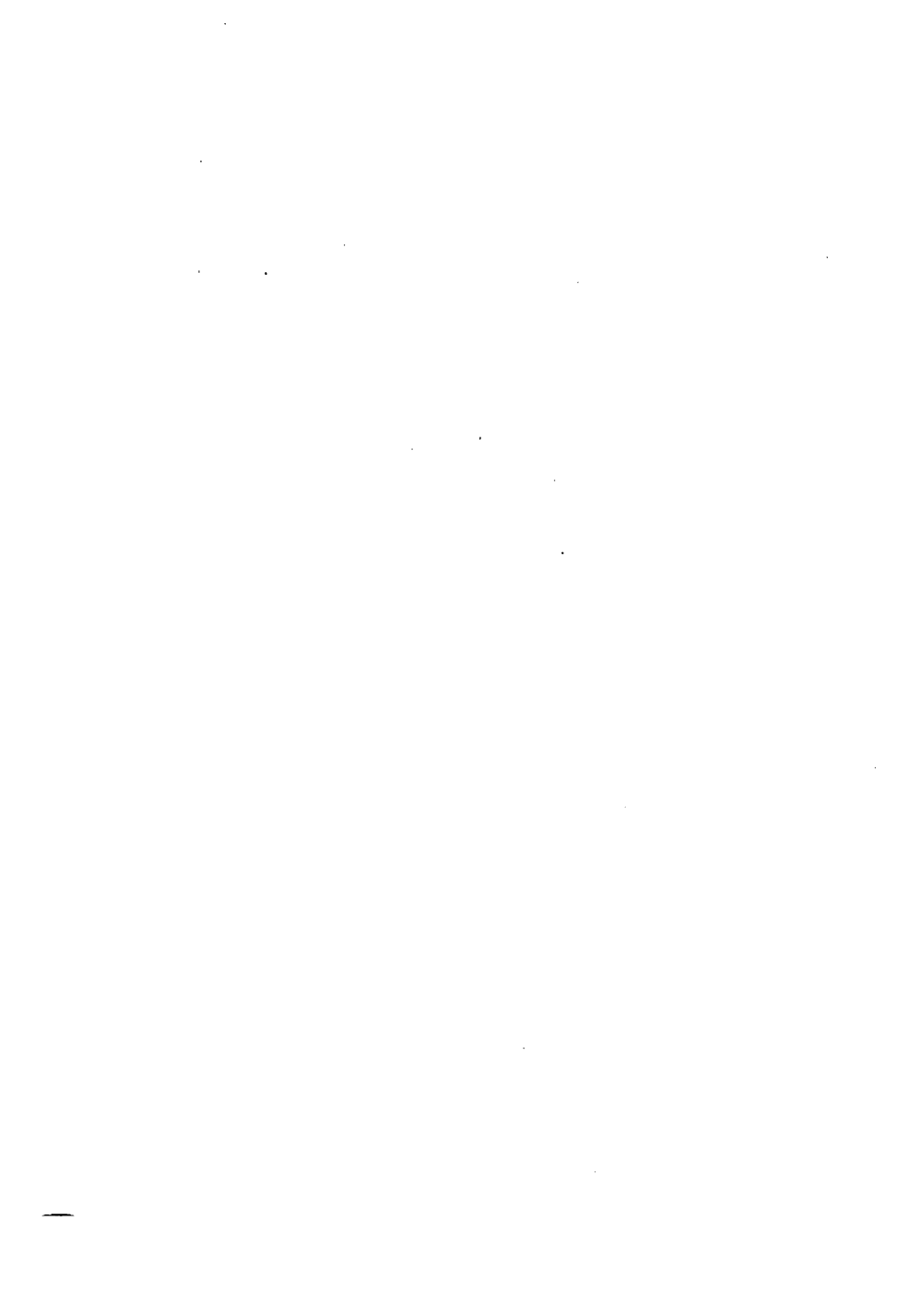
An interval followed

Of silverly murmured assent:

Not even the blare-begetting horn broke it.

Then slow sleep muted all to oblivion.

THE END



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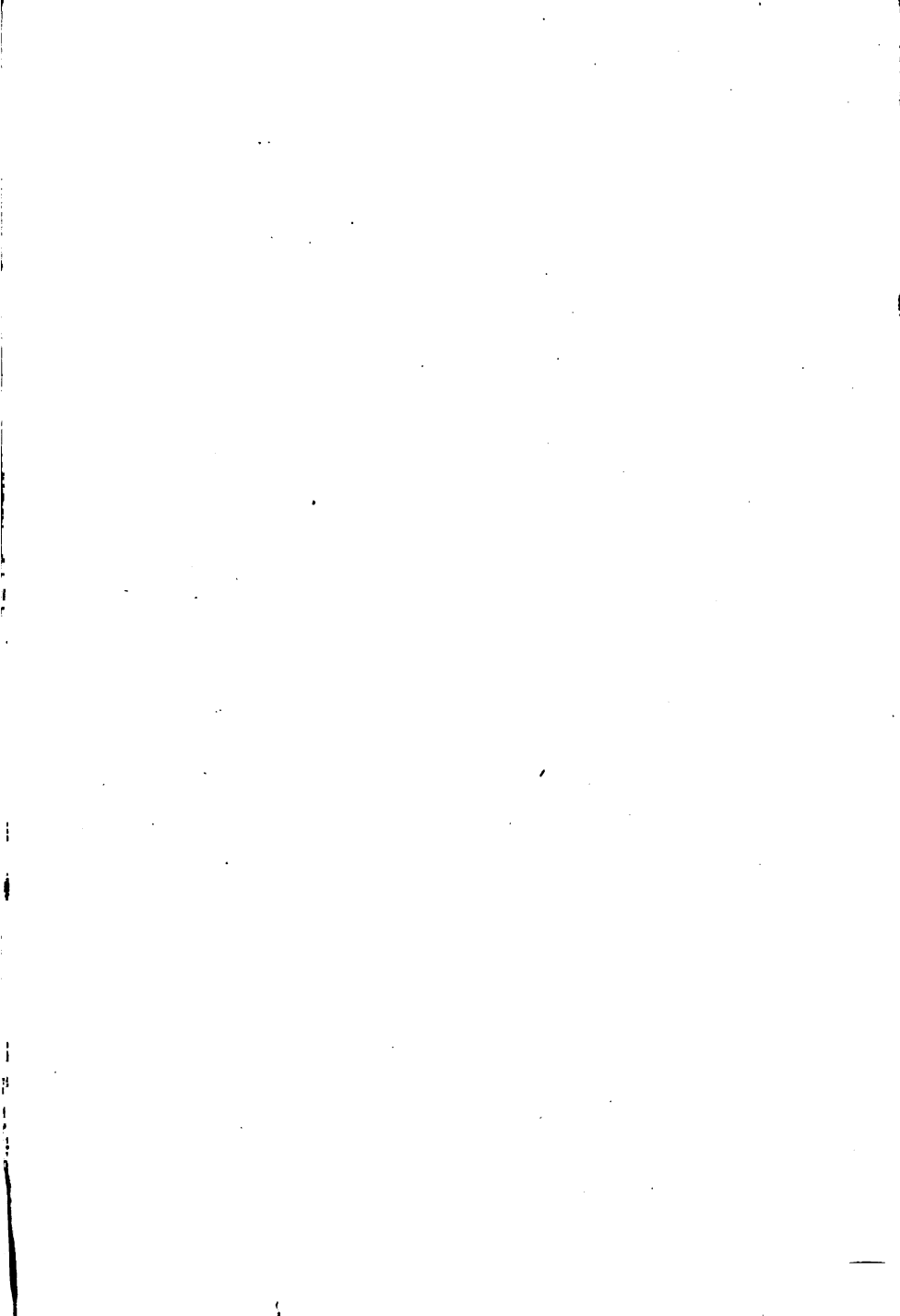
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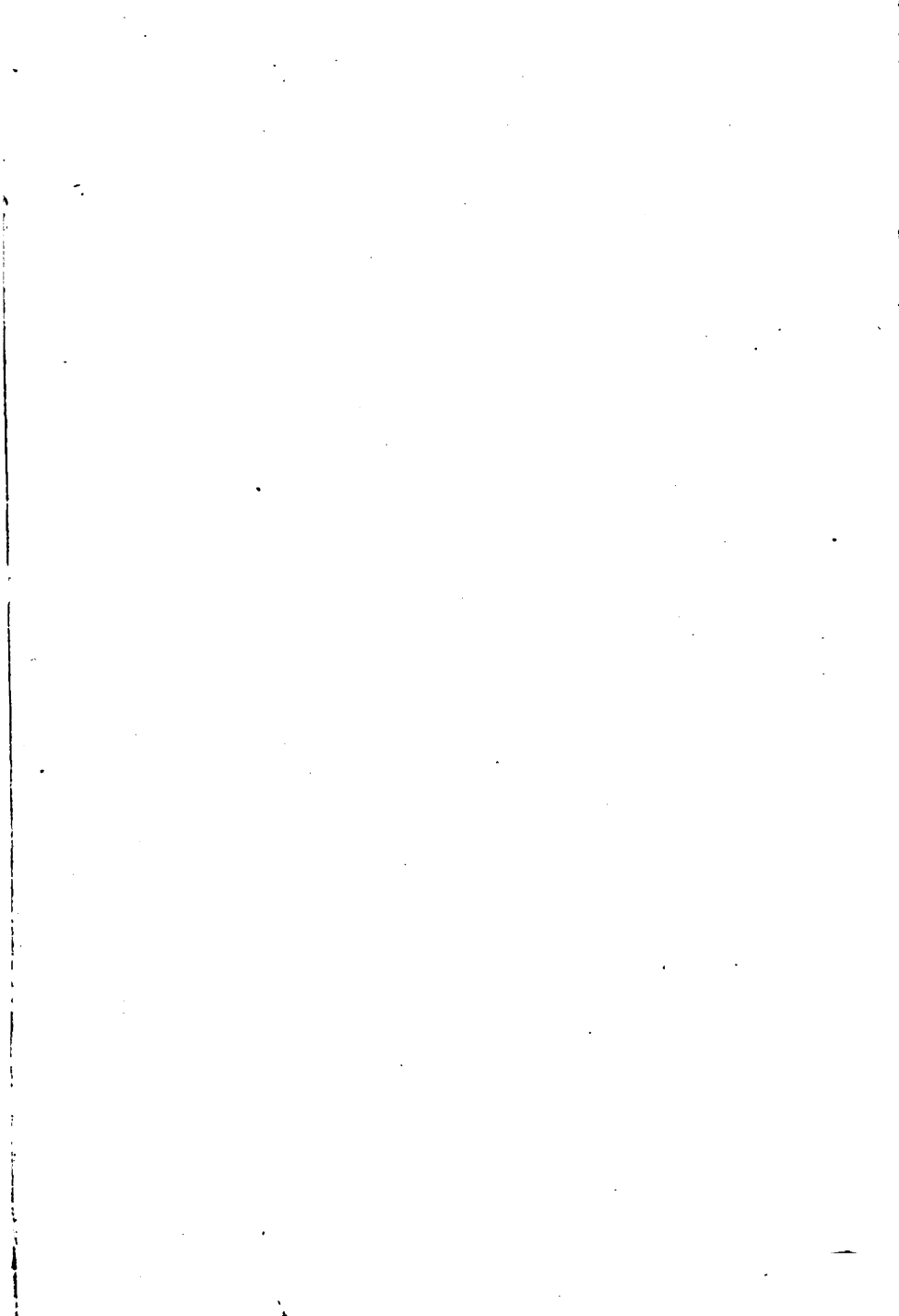
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